

SPECIAL REPORT: INSIDE THE NEW HORROR

Rod Serling's

October 1988

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Magazine

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**DAVID J.
SCHOW**

**NEW NOVELLA BY
THE AUTHOR
"THE KILL RIFF"**

**DAVID
LYNCH**

**INTERVIEW:
FROM "DUNE" TO
"BLUE VELVET"**

**PLUS
SEVEN
NEW TALES
OF FEAR
AND
FANTASY**

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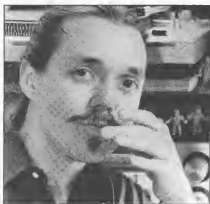
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WE'VE MOVED!

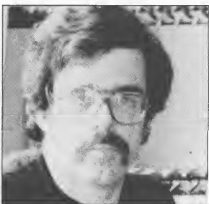
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IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE



David J. Schow



Wells Lord Hough



Philip Nutman

"SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. . . ." writes journalist **Philip Nutman** in his article "Inside the New Horror," about a new generation of writers who are changing the face of the literature of terror. The cutting edge of this movement is a group of writers nicknamed "Splatterpunk" for their raw, graphic style and rock 'n' roll intensity. Among them are several names *Twilight Zone* readers should already know: John Skipp, Craig Spector, and David J. Schow, who also contributes our first full-length novella, "The Falling Man." The novella will conclude in our December issue, alongside two new solo works from Skipp and Spector from their forthcoming Bantam collection *Deadlines*.

In a sidebar to Phil Nutman's article, critic Douglas E. Winter describes a related literary movement which he calls "Anti-horror." According to Winter, "Anti-horror" is horror that alters reality permanently; that reveals the underlying terror of our everyday lives. Our TZ Interview this issue is with a filmmaker whose work demonstrates this spirit. David Lynch, who made his acting debut earlier this year in *Jelly and Me*, has previously shown his wide creative range as an illustrator, composer, and writer, and as director of such films as *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dune*, and his greatest critical success, *Blue Velvet*. In his conversation with Contributing Editor James Verniere, Lynch speaks about his efforts to bring his visions to the screen, and his exploration of the darker side of the human soul.

Lest you get the impression that this is an "All New Wave Horror" issue, we should point out that our fiction this time covers a wide range of styles, from Arabian Nights fantasy to light humor and high-tech science fiction. However, two threads connect these tales. First, most of them remind us of that old adage about being careful about what we wish for, especially Jane Yolen's "Memoirs of a Bottle Djinn," Stanley Schmidt's "Floodgate," and James Killus's "Heart's Desire." The second is that, by a strange coincidence, the majority of our writers this issue are also editors. David Schow has just completed a new horror anthology titled *Silver Scream*, Elizabeth Mitchell (author of "Animals") recently concluded a stint as a Senior Editor at Baen Books, Stan Schmidt is the editor of *Analog SF*, and Jane Yolen, an award-winning anthologist, has just been given her own imprint by Harcourt, Brace.

We are also pleased to present in this issue a previously unpublished story by the late Richard Wilson, the Nebula Award-winning author of "Mother to the World." This tale, "The Name on the Book," should make you pay closer attention to the books in the stacks the next time you're browsing.

"Dreams of Drowning," our TZ First this issue, was brought to our attention by Nebula and Hugo winner Orson Scott Card. Its author, Wells Lord Hough (known to his friends as "Bud"), sent us this biographical note:

"The way I see it, it's all Robert Heinlein's fault. After being born on October 5, 1956, I managed to make it

through school in the ordinary way until Thanksgiving vacation when I was in the eighth grade, and had to do an old-fashioned book report over the holidays. Since I was into model rocketry, I picked up a book with a rocket ship on the cover. The book was *Rocket Ship Galileo* by Robert A. Heinlein. I read it in one night, and after finishing it, my first thought was, 'Where has this stuff been hiding until now? And, more important: Is there any more?' Thank goodness, there was, and still is, and now I'm writing the stuff.

"As to *why* I write this stuff, I figure the safest place for the ideas and schemes that keep popping up in my head at the strangest times and places is a piece of paper. With many thanks to Scott Card for the help he gave me with this story, I hope you enjoy 'Dreams of Drowning.' If any of you have little blonde daughters, I'd suggest you don't read this right before you go to bed."

To round out this issue, we have an expanded TZ Screening Room section to help you through the summer movie season, a column by David Dow entitled "Confessions of a Video Junkie," about TV series on video, and a new feature called *Other Dimensions*, a successor to our *Other Side* section. This issue also includes two full pages of TZ Letters (in response to your requests), as well as a report on the results of our recent Reader Survey.

One thing more: *The Twilight Zone Magazine* has relocated to new quarters. Please note our new address on the contents page of this issue, and we hope to see you again next time. ■

EDITOR'S NOTES

Methuselah's Grandchildren

A FEW WEEKS BACK, I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM A FRIEND. HE WAS CALLING to tell me that Robert Heinlein had died.

Heinlein would have been celebrating his eighty-first birthday about the time you read these words. Somehow, I always assumed he would live on indefinitely, like his immortal alter ego Lazarus Long in *Methuselah's Children* and *Time Enough for Love*. To me, it was the death of a family member. Science fiction had lost its spiritual father—its center of gravity.

As I thought about Heinlein, I realized that he had affected my life in dozens of small but profound ways. I got through some of the roughest days of my childhood by retreating into the wondrous worlds he had created for me. When I was given an account at the local bookstore for my ninth birthday, the first "real" book I ever bought was *The Red Planet*. As I grew older, it seemed that Heinlein grew with me. In my teens, I learned more about society and how it should function from *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* and *Stranger in a Strange Land* than from any history or philosophy text.

And, one autumn afternoon while I was standing in a college bookstore talking a young man out of reading *I Will Fear No Evil* as his first Heinlein, and into reading *A Citizen of the Galaxy*, a young woman nearby said: "I agree. It stinks. But you should start with *Podkayne of Mars*." I've forgotten the young man's name; the young woman and I have been together now for nearly twenty years—and she is also a science fiction editor.

But I'm not the only person whose life would have been immeasurably different if Robert Heinlein had never started writing. Imagine a world where science fiction remained a pulp literature a while longer because there was no writer of Heinlein's stature. Where the film *Destination Moon* was never made, because there was no one with Heinlein's gifts to act as technical advisor. Where the space program took decades to get off the ground because America's scientists and politicians never saw that film. Where an entire generation turned away from the sciences because there were no Heinlein stories to inspire them.

Or, on a more personal level, imagine a world without Heinlein's literary children, and grandchildren. A world in which fewer writers and artists turned to science fiction and fantasy because Heinlein had not blazed the trail; and therefore a world in which the rich array of fantastic literature—from "hard" sf and "new wave" to "high fantasy" and "dark fantasy," to "cyberpunk" and "splatterpunk" and "elpunk" and all the rest—never came to be.

One more: Imagine if a brilliant young television writer, casting about for a place to make a statement about social issues in a popular form, hadn't read the stories of Robert Heinlein and his successors, hadn't thrilled to the dawn of manned spaceflight and the promise of worlds beyond our own. Then a certain television program most assuredly would never have been made. And the magazine you're holding in your hand would not exist.

In a very real sense we are all Heinlein's children.



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LETTERS

IS IT MY IMAGINATION, OR IS YOUR MARVELOUS illustration on the August '88 cover the spitting image of actor Roy Thinnes, who used to be the star of *The Invaders*, a terrific sf TV series some years back?

Please let your fans know. I for one am certainly curious.

Keep the good stuff comin'!

JEANETTE LIPKIN
Atco, NJ

We think it's just your imagination, Jeanette. But, on the other hand, anything's possible in the Twilight Zone.—ED

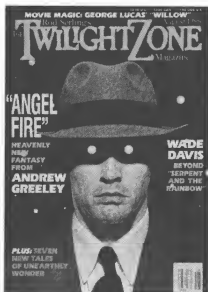
IN YOUR AUGUST ISSUE, "THE OTHER SIDE" segment by Ron Wolfe dealing with the legacy of France's Grand Guignol theater piqued my curiosity. It seems like an excellent pool of ghoulish fun.

I'm consistently amazed at the delight and satisfaction I feel at the close of each of your issues. The day I purchase it I close the door to my office and usually read it cover to cover. Besides being excellent entertainment, I often hope to find ideas ripe for film adaptation. Our company is always on the lookout for another *Nightmare on Elm Street*.

I sincerely hope your magazine continues to flourish and prosper. It's really the only thing of its kind left that lives up to the enormous legacy of the past five decades' development of imaginative fiction. Keep it coming!

MICHAEL DE LUCA
Director of Development
New Line Cinema

I AM WRITING TO CORRECT ERRONEOUS information in Bob Morrish's "Small Press" column, published in the June 1988 TZ. 2AM Publications is located at P.O. Box 6754, Rockford, IL 61125-1754. The Beryn



address given in the article is no longer in existence.

GRETTA M. ANDERSON
Editor and Publisher
2AM Publications

YOU DESERVE TO BE COMMENDED FOR the quality work that goes into every issue of *Twilight Zone*.

I have been reading *Twilight Zone* for the past four years and it has never failed to shock, amaze, horrify, and delight me. The short stories are by first-rate writers who invariably engross the reader within the first few syllables of the opening line, and the novel excerpts (*The Vampire Lestat* by Anne Rice comes immediately to mind) are from today's best science fiction/horror/fantasy authors. But some of us are addicted to such tales and have trouble waiting for the next issue. (I have been known to stake out the mailbox while awaiting its arrival.) You might consider going from six to twelve issues a year to put us addicts out of our misery.

Addition aside, I have enjoyed the past issues immensely and will probably continue to do so as long as *The Twilight*

Zone remains the quality magazine it has become. Gentlemen, take a bow.

JULIA BARNETT
Sanborn, NY

I HAVE READ THE ARTICLE ON THE THEORY of Chaos in TZ, June 1988. I greatly appreciated this article and would like to read more about it. I haven't been able to find the book entitled *Chaos: Making a New Science* from which the article was written. If possible I would like you to answer my letter and tell me where I could order a copy of this book.

This is the first time I've bought TZ, and I must say, I love it. Especially the article, "Ever Et Raw Meat?" and Other Weird Questions," by Stephen King. I'm going to keep on buying TZ.

FLORIAN HEHLEN
Quebec, Canada

Chaos: Making a New Science is available from Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010.—ED.

Pro- and Antiskeptics
ENJOYING THE JUNE ISSUE. NOT ONLY for the good tales, eldritch and otherwise, but also the intriguing "Illuminations" articles.

Why does the article "The Winds of Chaos" for some reason remind me

CONTINUED ON PAGE 95

We welcome letters on any subject of interest to our readers. All letters must contain your name and address and are assumed to be intended for publication, unless you request otherwise. Letters submitted become the property of the Publisher, and we reserve the right to edit them for length or suitability. Send letters to TZ LETTERS DEPARTMENT, 401 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016-8802.

BOOKS

EDWARD BRYANT

From Reel to Real: Cinematic horror and other tricks of light.

Stinger by Robert R. McCammon
The Drive In by Joe R. Lansdale
Silver Scream edited by David J. Schow
Fire on the Mountain by Terry Bisson
Barking Dogs by Terence M. Green
The Cormorant by Stephen Gregory
Talots by Steven Brust
In Darkness Waiting by John Shirley

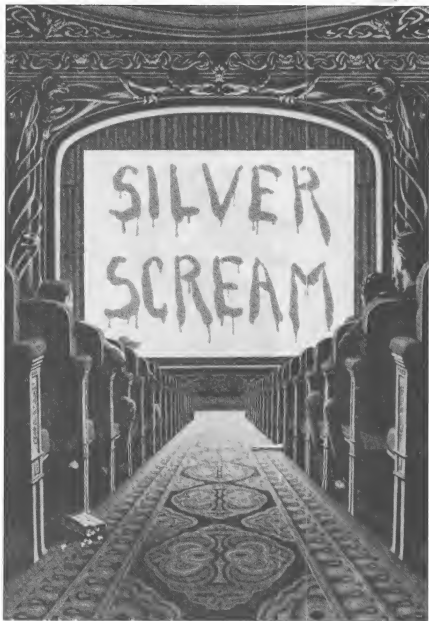
This is all about light; light and the bearers of same.

Cinema is an art you cannot hold in your fingers. A videotape cassette, a heavy canister of thirty-five millimeter film, neither of these can begin to suggest the magic lying dormant within. That magic is evident only in what is apprehended by the eye. The art is pure light, light that is shattered, manipulated, stored, and then reassembled into images our eyes transmit to the brain for interpretation.

Writing can attempt to replicate the ephemeral stimuli of a projector's magic beam. Words on paper can do a pretty fair job of evoking the dancing photons that bring a screen to life. That's the springboard for this month, a dusk-to-dawn marathon of movie madness, with free donuts at sunrise for the survivors. So suck on your Diet Coke, crunch the buttered popcorn, and enjoy the darkness as the curtain goes up.

Killer "B's"

Robert R. McCammon's *Stinger* (Pocket, \$4.95, 538 pp., ISBN 0-671-62412-1)



is just about the biggest, splashiest, most Technicolor-saturated fifties B-movie one could ever imagine sitting through on a Friday night in some small-town theater, or, even better, as the "A" half of the double bill out at the drive-in lurking in the darkness on the edge of town. Perhaps it's not McCammon's most ambitious work, but it is a piece of nonstop action-suspense that doesn't let down for a second. This popcorn is

well-buttered, let me tell you.

Be under no delusion that I'm handing out a mere tepid left-handed compliment when I use a phrase such as "fifties B-movie"; no more so than in my last column when I considered Stephen King's *The Tommyknockers* as an eighties novel incorporating the finer sensibilities of fifties science fiction. It's an affectionate observation, not a condemnation.

Stinger has a first-contact plot in

BOOKS

which a spaceship crashes to Earth not too distant from a desolate, flyblown, hard-baked West Texas town—actually twin towns, what with Bordertown (Hispanic) and Inferno (Anglo) simmering in mutual distrust on either side of the Snake River Bridge. The nonhuman pilot bails out in an escape capsule and ultimately inhabits the body of six-year-old Stevie, the daughter of the local veterinarian and her high school teacher husband. Calling itself Daufin, the alien attempts to communicate with the humans in the town, warning them that Big Trouble is still to come. The trouble turns out to be a huge pyramidal starship of highly sinister aspect that lands later in the day. The new ship promptly sets up a force-field around the towns and totally isolates all the characters from the outside world. It seems the second alien is a bounty hunter out to bring back Daufin to its despotical employers. Called "Stinger" by Daufin, the second alien is not a nice person and promptly starts kidnapping locals to turn them into hideous half-human, half-animatronic scorpions to do its bidding. The body count gets pretty high as Stinger goes hog-wild, holding Earth-folk in no higher regard than exterminators consider cockroaches. Arrayed against Stinger are the full spectrum of locals, both heroic and cowardly, the misleadingly frail-appearing Stevie, and rival teen gangs, both brown and white.

So why does *Stinger* seem to me so cinematic? Well, for openers, the initial scene is a teaser, a preview of coming attractions that doesn't actually appear in the novel's text until page 448. Mainly what tripped my visual memory synapses were a whole montage of thematic and visual references to films both new and old. Probably most were not even deliberate. Or perhaps it's true that your reviewer simply has some peculiar VCR virus that warps all his perceptions. But when Daufin's spaceship came burning out of the sky above the desert, I had instant flashbacks to *It Came from Outer Space*. Ditto when the townspeople started getting replaced by almost-duplicates. When human victims started getting sucked down into little whirlpools of sand, my memory zapped back to *Invaders from Mars*. There are more contemporary images, too, that remind one of *The Terminator* and the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. And so on. My purpose is not to play the parlor game of film ref-

erences here, but simply to cite a few reasons why all of us movie-buff types will particularly get a kick out of McCammon's novel.

The quality of writing is on the high end of the commercial spectrum, with occasional, annoying lapses of logic in the plot, but nothing terminal. McCammon seems to want to popularize the common usage of the verb "to wham," but that's not an important caveat.



What's very pleasant is the author's setting up and juggling of a typical pop-novel cast of what seems to be a few hundred characters. He occasionally pulls a switch on our reader preconceptions (such as with the loutish Cool Hand Luke-style sheriff who, surprisingly, but pleasingly, evolves as a genuine, fresh character), enough so that *Stinger* can't be blown off as simply just another forgettable two-finger exercise. It's a page-turner with class.

Southern Discomfort

Here's a much, much stranger movie-novel. What if, instead of being trapped in a small town by a thoroughly nasty alien (which would probably twirl its moustache if it had one), you were invaded by aliens with the apparent higher sensibilities of USC Film School students, who isolated you with your two thousand fellow patrons one night at a giant Texas six-plex drive-in showing nothing but horror-and-violence flicks? Now that's scary, and it all happens in Joe R. Lansdale's *The Drive In* (Bantam Spectra, 192 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-553-27481-3).

Strangely, while Lansdale's quick-and-dirty (the 192 pages just seem to flash by) novel is all about Americans' love affair with the movies, and is just

as crowded with even more overt film references than McCammon's *Stinger*, *The Drive In*'s roots come across as much more from the literary than the cinematic side of pop culture. *The Drive In* is firmly grounded in the fifties British post-disaster survivalist tradition—see John Bowen's *After the Rain*, most of John Wyndham, and the J.G. Ballard of the early sixties.

In spite of the novel's subtitle ("A B-movie with blood and popcorn, made in Texas"), *The Drive In* is a book to be taken seriously. Think about Thomas Disch's incredibly bleak *The Genocides*, only with laughs. Lansdale pulls it off.

A large part of how Lansdale can achieve what turns out to be a trickily brash novel is through his prose. There may be no other writer within our field, and possibly only a few outside it, who can so adeptly utilize the rich, colorful, raunchy language of the blue-collar South. Lansdale's ear is impeccable, reflected in the auctorial voice, as he creates such quirky characters as the itinerant preacher who paints his neckties on because he can't tie the knots, or lets characters describe a lesser brand of beef jerky as "...kind of like chewing on a dead woman's tit." Thus it's a truly bizarre and wonderful Uncle Joe who addresses us from across a smoky campfire and tells us this tale of perfectly ordinary guys caught up in a nightmare conceit of satire, violence, bravery, sardonic compassion, cannibalism, crucifixion, and wry common sense. Life may be a horror show, Lansdale suggests, but there's always a second feature.

Scream Gems

What with the enormous proliferation of collections compiled by such prolific anthologists as Martin Harry Greenberg, one might wonder whether there's any market at all left for the theme anthology. Novelist and award-winning story writer David J. Schow has adroitly proven there is. Witness *Silver Scream* (Dark Harvest, \$19.95, 371 pp., ISBN 0-913165-27-X, P.O. Box 48134, Niles, IL 60648). This latest offering from the specialty-press team of Paul Mikol and Scot Stadsalsky is the most handsome addition so far to the shelf of fiction about the often magic, sometimes tawdry, world of movies and television, and the men and women who create and inhabit it. It's one of the most entertaining, stimulating, and absolutely justified theme anthologies in recent years.

Silver Scream collects twenty new and old (but mostly unpublished) sto-

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VIDEO

DAVID W. DOW

Confessions of a Video Junkie

I used to work the evening shift in a restaurant, and didn't get home until late. When I did get home, I usually opened a beer and turned on the tube. Relaxation and escape were all I wanted. Instead, I got reruns of *My Friend Flicka* or *Lassie*, or some horribly dubbed Italian movie. The great old shows I would have enjoyed were never on when I was around to watch them.

Those days are gone. Now I have a VCR and membership in several video rental clubs. Now, when I get tired of David Letterman, I just pop a cassette into the VCR and watch what I want to watch... or at least what I can find.

There's the problem. Like you, I especially enjoy sf, fantasy, and horror. But I'm not always up to watching a two-hour movie of dubious quality. (I've already seen the ones I really like, and the latest ones are never available on short notice anyway.)

One day, though, I noticed that my local video store had episodes of *Star Trek* available on tape. It was a sort of mini-revelation to me. You could actually rent television shows! (I know, I should "time shift" like my friends do. But I'm a technopeasant at heart, and never seem to program my machine properly.) Soon I'd discovered they also had episodes of *The Outer Limits* and, much to my delight, *The Twilight Zone*. The funny thing is, the old shows hold up much better on repeated viewing than most movies do. I finally broke down and actually bought some of them (something I rarely do), just to have them available when the mood strikes.

Next, I asked the store manager what other great old television series they had. "Like what?" she asked. I looked at her blankly. I knew there were

a lot of old shows I'd liked, but at that moment I couldn't remember a single one of them by name.

That's when I decided to do my part to try to preserve our common cultural heritage. There are a lot of terrific old science fiction, fantasy, and suspense shows that make terrific viewing—shows older tube-addicts may have forgotten, and younger couch potatoes may not even be aware of. I've compiled a highly personal list of my own favorites, along with some notes as to what makes each so enjoyable.

So, without further ado, my highly opinionated recommendations for fantasy TV-on-tape, flavored with a bit of television history. Bon appetit!

Video Rangers

Network television really began in earnest in 1947. That's when they began to provide a significant portion of the programming offered on local stations. In those early days, the networks (there were four, including the tiny Dumont Network) offered very little for science fiction fans. The best they had to offer were the basement-budget kiddie space adventures that dominated the afternoon airwaves. The most popular was *Captain Video* and his *Video Rangers*, starring first Richard Coogan, and later Al Hodge, as the redoubtable Captain Video ("The Guardian of the Safety of the World") and young Don Hastings as his Ranger sidekick. With a prop budget of less than twenty-five bucks a week, there were precious few special effects, and almost no portrayals of violent death. (The Captain's "Cosmic Ray Vibrator" shook adversaries into submission!) But the program was enormously popular in its day, and even

won awards for the Captain's short talks to the "Rangers at home" on the value of tolerance, personal integrity, and fair play.

The show was immediately imitated by a slew of others, including *Tom Corbet—Space Cadet*, *Space Patrol*, and *Red Brown of the Rocket Rangers*. This last one, starring Cliff Robertson, opened with the following stirring monologue:

Surging with the power of the atom, gleaming like great, silver bullets, the mighty Rocket Rangers' space ships stand ready for blast-off. Up, up, rockets blazing with white-hot fury, the man-made meteors ride through the atmosphere, breaking the gravity barrier, pushing up and out, faster and faster—and then: outer space and high adventure for the Rocket Rangers!

Viewed today, these series are campy and crude. But there's an earnest, gonzo energy in them that I, for one, love.

Anthologies

Network television made its greatest artistic strides in variety and drama shows bearing the name of a single corporate sponsor (*GE Theatre*, *The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports*, *The Texaco Star Parade*). Most such programs did their best to please the entire family, either by mixing a variety of entertainers, or by anthology programs that offered a different type of drama each week, usually introduced by a well-known host. It was as a writer for these anthology programs that Rod Serling first gained national attention.

It was natural that some of these anthologies should concern the strange and the unknown. The trend had begun

earlier, on radio, with programs like *The Inner Sanctum*. Arch Obler's *Lights Out* was one of the first to make the transition to television, with its cadaverous host Frank Gallup, followed shortly after by *Out There*, which featured original science fiction dramas and adaptations of classic pulp-magazine tales.

It was a famous filmmaker, however, who took the form to greater heights. In *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* the master of suspense not only offered his name, but provided those memorable ghoulish openings and closers. (Those narrations saved Hitchcock from violating the Broadcast Code more than once. Though the bad guy often got away with murder onscreen, Hitchcock would return "after a brief commercial interruption" to explain how justice had, after all, been served.)

I'll only touch briefly on Rod Serling's contribution to the form, since it's been definitively summed up in these pages, and in Marc Zicree's *Twilight Zone Companion*. But the success of the show led to three notable successors: *The Outer Limits*, Roald Dahl's *Way Out*, and, later, *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*, which Serling hosted, but did not control.

Strange Bedfellows

One enduring theme in fantastic television, partly because it lends itself well to a series format, is the pairing of a more-or-less normal person with an individual with supernatural or supernatural powers. A classic of the form was *Topper*. The series starred Leo G. Carroll as Cosmo Topper, who moves into a pleasant house at 101 Maple Drive, only to discover that its former occupants, George and Marion Kirby (Robert Sterling and Anne Jeffreys), are still inhabiting—or should I say *haunting*—the house, along with an alcoholic St. Bernard named Neil. The result, an oddly wonderful mix of *Blondie* and *The Thin Man*, is a disarmingly warm comedy; one that's been imitated, but never equalled.

The formula was used frequently in the sixties, usually done for laughs. Prime examples include *The Addams Family* starring John Astin and Carolyn Jones as loveable monsters, and *The Munsters*, with Fred Gwynne and Yvonne DeCarlo in similar roles. Others included *My Favorite Martian*, with Bill Bixby and Ray Walston in the title role; Jerry Van Dyke and the voice of Ann Southern in the laughable *My Mother the Car*, a pre-I.R. Larry Hagman and Barbara Eden in *I Dream of Jeannie*, about an astronaut in love with

Videocassette Distributors

All of the Home Video Distributors listed below will send consumers a free catalog of their videocassette offerings if you provide them with your name and address.

ABC Video Enterprises
1901 Ave. of the Stars
Los Angeles, CA 90067
(213) 285-6000

RCA/Columbia Pictures
2901 W. Alameda Ave.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 953-7900

HBO/Cannon Home Video
1370 Ave. of the Americas
New York, NY 10019
(212) 977-8990

Karl-Lorimar Home Video
17942 Cowan
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 474-0355

Vestron Video
Sales Division
60 Longridge Road
Stamford, CT 06907
(203) 967-9200

CBS Video Library
1400 North Fruitridge Avenue
Terre Haute, IN 47811

MCA Home Video
70 Universal City Plaza
Universal City, CA 91608
(818) 777-4300

MGM/UA Home Video
10000 W. Washington Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(213) 280-6000

Paramount Home Video
5555 Melrose Ave.
Hollywood, CA 90038
(213) 468-5000

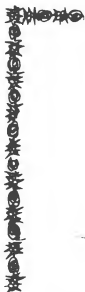
Buena Vista Home Video
WDTNT Co.
Burbank, CA 91521
(818) 840-0044

Warner Bros. Home Video
4000 Warner Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91522
(818) 954-6000

Rhino Video
1201 Olympic Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90404
(213) 828-1980

a genie, and Elizabeth Montgomery's witty performance as a suburban witch in *Bewitched*. The culmination of all this foolishness, *My Living Doll*, starring Julie Newman, as a cross between *My Fair Lady* and *Frankenstein*, fell flat on its funnybone.

The trend continued into the seventies. One example was *The Girl with Something Extra*, a pleasant-enough domestic comedy starring Sally Field (who had previously worked this territory in *The Flying Nun*) as a housewife with psychic powers. It was probably han-



Splatter: A Cautionary Tale by Douglas E. Winter

introduction by
Clive Barker

illustrations by
J.K. Potter

afterword by
Michael Morrison

filmography by
Douglas E. Winter
\$13.00



Other Chapbooks Available: *Medusa*, a science fiction nightmare by Ramsey Campbell (s/n) with introduction by Dennis Etchison, \$19.00; *The Dragon*, limited to 300 signed copies by Ray Bradbury, \$20.00; *Slow*, by Ramsey Campbell, introduction by T.E.D. Klein, and illustrated, \$5.00. Please include \$2.00 shipping and handling for first item ordered and 50¢ for each Chapbook thereafter in the same order.

Forthcoming: Graham Masterton's *Hurry Monster*; Richard C. Matheson's *Holiday*, with introduction by Richard Matheson; *The Shadow Sea*, by Dean R. Koontz, and T.E.D. Klein. Catalogue available, include SASE. Footsteps Press, Bill Munster, Box 75Z, Round Top, New York 12473.

VIDEO

dled best, however, in *Mork and Mindy*. The tale of a hilariously confused alien who comes to earth in an egg-shaped space ship, Mork was energized by Robin Williams's inspired antics, ably supported by perky Pam Dawber as his straight woman and love interest. (Best moment: Williams's daft byplay with Jonathan Winters as an Orkan child.) The gimmick continues to be recycled endlessly; recent examples include *Starman*, *Small Wonder*, and, of course, *Alf*.

It's a Bird! It's a Plane!

Another staple of sf and fantasy on TV are superheroes. While *Superman* starring George Reeves had been played more or less straight, *Batman* was the essence of sixties camp. It featured the hilariously wooden performances of Adam West and Burt Ward, animated "Pows" and "Bams" in the fight scenes, humorously grotesque villains, and a host of wretched puns. *The Green Hornet* was unintentionally funny—*Batman* without the kitsch value. Its only saving grace was a young Bruce Lee as the ever-faithful Kato. *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and its spin-off *The Bionic Woman*, began ambitiously, but soon degenerated into farce. Two Marvel Comics superheroes, *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*, were, as might be expected, three-dimensional cartoons, made worse by the poor special effects of the former, and the overacting of Bill Bixby in the latter, as he transformed himself into a green-skinned monster (played by bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno). And the studios repeatedly tried, and failed, to do humorous superheroes (such as *Hero at Large* and *Mr. Terrific*). The only exception was the clever Stephen J. Cannell production *The Greatest American Hero*, which skillfully blended comedy and drama.

Adventures and Misadventures

For some reason, TV never seems to be able to get the big-budget science fiction adventure series right. The exception that proves the rule, of course, is *Star Trek*, which was originally planned to be a science-fictional cross between *Gunsmoke* and *Wagon Train*. The shows that followed in its wake, from the semi-serious *Lost in Space* to the overly-contrived *Time Tunnel* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, hit new lows in fantasy drama. The next generation, including *Logan's Run*, *Voyagers*, and *Planet of the Apes*, were uneven at best. The

end of the decade saw a rash of expensively produced *Star Wars* clones, notably the ponderous *Battlestar Galactica*, and the amusingly done *Buck Rogers*, enjoyable in spite of "Tweekee," Buck's "cute" robot companion.

Oddly enough, TV has also had trouble doing horror well, especially in series format. (Gene Roddenberry's excellent pilot *Spectre*, about a team of ghost-breakers, never became a series, alas.) There are two memorable exceptions, which happen to be two of my personal favorites.

The first, *Dark Shadows*, took the daring step of mixing the soap opera form with Gothic Horror, to create something so unique that it became an instant cult classic. (Even now there are *Dark Shadows* conventions and festivals all over the country.) Featuring ghosts, ghouls, and haunted mansions, and some strange time-tripping between the twentieth and nineteenth centuries, it showcased the talents of actor Jonathan Frid as vampire Barnabas Collins, a sort of Mr. Spock with fangs. The other inspired horror series was a late-nighter called *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. It starred Darren McGavin as an irascible reporter for the Independent News Service, who was always

stumbling over weird occurrences (mummies, werewolves, etc.). Best moment: Kolchak railing at the police of his boss Tony Vincenzo (Simon Oakland) about some supernatural menace about to go on a rampage. (Needless to say, he was never believed.) It remains a rare treat amid inept TV horror movies and pale imitators like Fox Television's *Werewolf*.

As you can see, I've barely been able to scratch the surface. There isn't time here to discuss the borderline adventure series like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, or *The Wild, Wild West*, or the riches of British television, (especially *The Prisoner*, *The Avengers*, and *Doctor Who*). But I hope I've been able to at least pique your interest a bit.

Many of these shows haven't been collected on video yet. Much of what is available shows up on compilation videos (Rhino Video does these better than anyone). So, to help you with your research, I've included a listing of the names of the major video distributors. They'll be happy to send you a free catalog upon request. If you can't find these or other shows, I encourage you to write to these distributors. Your letter is one "vote" to bring back a classic in videotape form. ■

Recommended Viewing

In the list below, I've divided my own personal favorites by category. I've also awarded each show stars, the way movie critics do. In this listing, three stars represent shows that made a difference; that were somehow leaders in their category. Two stars were given to programs that were consistently excellent. And I gave one star to any show that I found interesting or novel, despite minor flaws. Enjoy!

Anthologies:

- *** The Twilight Zone
- *** Alfred Hitchcock Presents
- *** The Outer Limits
- ** Lights Out
- * Night Gallery
- * One Step Beyond
- * Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected
- * Out There
- * Science Fiction Theatre
- * Thriller

Fifties Space Operas:

- ** Captain Video and His Video Rangers
- * Tom Corbett—Space Cadet
- * Commando Cody
- * Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

- * Flash Gordon
- * Red Brown of the Rocket Rangers
- * Space Patrol
- * Men Into Space

Silly Sixties Spoofs:

- *** Dr. Who
- *** Wild, Wild West
- *** The Avengers
- ** Batman
- ** The Invaders
- ** Man from U.N.C.L.E.
- ** My Favorite Martian
- * My Mother the Car
- * The Addams Family
- * The Munsters

Seventies Super Humans:

- *** Mork and Mindy
- ** Buck Rogers
- ** The Incredible Hulk
- * The Girl With Something Extra
- * The Six Million Dollar Man
- * Holmes and Yoyo
- * Wonder Woman
- * Battlestar Galactica

Six Unique Shows:

- *** The Prisoner
- *** The Twilight Zone
- *** Star Trek
- *** Topper
- *** Dark Shadows
- *** Kolchak: The Night Stalker

ILLUMINATIONS

AND NOW...

TWILIGHT ZONE— THE GAME

You're traveling into another dimension. A dimension of silicon and electrons, of parsers and pixels. You've just crossed over into—the Software Zone....

Up to now, there have only been three ways to enter the Twilight Zone—video, film, and fiction. Now there's a fourth: your computer.

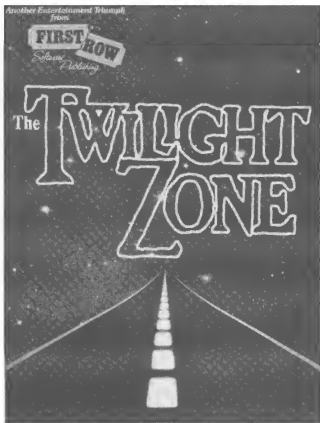
First Row Software Publishing, Inc., a new computer game company, has just released an interactive computer game called—you guessed it—"The Twilight Zone."

"We were delighted when we learned that rights to do a Twilight Zone computer game were available from Viacom," said Steve Shaifer, a First Row Senior Vice President. "The television show is a classic. It's maintained a loyal audience for nearly thirty years. When we decided to do the game, we realized we had quite a challenge in front of us—recreating that unique experience in a way that took advantage of the special interactive properties of a new medium." First Row's solution to the problem was ingenious.

The game, subtitled "Crossroads of the Imagination," puts you, the player, in the sort of situation a character on the original show would encounter. "Basically, you wake up in a strange place, and your adventures get progressively stranger," says Mike Breggar, First Row's Director of Software Development. "Like the original show, the adventures are episodic, but there's a hidden link between them." What's the link? "I don't want to give too much away," Breggar says, "since the surprise is part of the fun. But I will say that finding that link contributes to the solution of the story. But you have to watch out, because we've also included a classic Twilight Zone-style 'twist' ending."

The game, which retails for \$39.95, is being released first on the Commodore Amiga, to take advantage of that machine's advanced graphics and sound capabilities. There are over sixty full-color "screens" with variable elements (a dozen more than most such games). The game also has a sophisticated state-of-the-art "parser" that recognizes a wide range of sentences. A version for the IBM PC and compatibles is scheduled for release in September, with versions for the Commodore 64/128 to follow in November.

Although First Row has been preparing to enter the game market for over three years, their first releases debuted in January of this year. They include a space adventure, "Star Empire"; a game called "Prime Time" ("the game that makes you a network Big Shot"); and a game created by veteran



designers Michael and Muffy Berlyn ("Suspended," "Cyborg"), called "Dr. Dumont's Wild P.A.R.T.I.," in which a mad scientist links you to an even madder computer.

What lies ahead in the Software Zone? "We've already begun work on a sequel to the first Twilight Zone game, involving a writer who gets trapped inside his own stories," says Mike Breggar. "If the response to the first game is good, we plan to release it next year."

For more information about the game, write to: First Row Software Publishing, Inc., 900 East Eighth Avenue, Suite 300, King of Prussia, PA, 19406.

—Tappan Kihg

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ILLUMINATIONS



ROAD TO THE STARS

In the summer of 1958, Rod Serling completed a revision of his hour-long teleplay "The Time Element," an eerie tale of a man who travels through a time-warp back to World War II. On the title page, he typed the words "THE TWILIGHT ZONE." Though the teleplay was not produced as a pilot for the series, it was adapted for use on the Desilu Playhouse, and broadcast in fall, 1958. So successful was the drama, that CBS agreed to begin production on *The Twilight Zone* immediately. The first episode aired on October 2, 1959, and the rest is history.

Thus, 1988 marks the beginning of the thirtieth an-

niversary year of the creation of *The Twilight Zone*. It is a measure of the genius of Rod Serling that his idea is still vital and growing today. As evidence of this, here are only a few of the activities concerning Rod Serling and *The Twilight Zone* that are taking place this year:

☆ In April, a special program on the life and work of Rod Serling was presented at conventions in Scranton, PA, and Syracuse, NY. Hosted by Michael Pipher, President of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, the program featured a slide presentation of rare photographs from the foundation's archives, a color

trailer for *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*, and the public debut of a lost promotional film, in which Rod Serling pitches his concept of *The Twilight Zone* to potential advertisers. Guest speakers included TZ Editor-In-Chief Tappan King, and Helen Foley, Rod Serling's teacher, who reminisced about Serling's school days.

☆ In early June, TZ staff appeared at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Chicago, in conjunction with the debut of First Row Software's new "Twilight Zone" game. The fifty-foot booth, which featured a four-by-six-foot reproduction of a *Twilight Zone* cover and demonstrations of the game, was one of the convention's most visited attractions.

☆ On June 28, (the thirteenth anniversary of Rod Serling's death), the Serling Foundation dedicated a memorial marker in Serling's home

town of Binghamton, NY. The ceremonies included the sale of souvenirs and memorabilia, display of a sketch for a proposed Rod Serling postage stamp, film presentations and live performances of several Rod Serling dramas. [For more information about the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, write to: PO Box 2101, Binghamton, NY 13901, or call Michael Pipher at (607) 754-7771.]

☆ But the excitement isn't over yet. On October 6, Rod Serling will receive his own "star" on Hollywood's fabled "Walk of Fame." Carol Serling and the staff of the new syndicated *Twilight Zone* series will take part in the festivities, which coincide with the broadcast debut of the new episodes.

☆ We'll be featuring exclusive reports on all of these activities and more in our special December Rod Serling Tribute Issue, on sale in September.

My Journey into the Twilight Zone, by Michael Crichton

Ultimate Fitness!
A special 21-page introduction

Man At His Best
with John H. Johnson

No, we're not merging with *Esquire*, despite the evidence above. It seems that author Michael (*Andromeda Strain*, *Sphere*) Crichton has just completed a new nonfiction work, *Travels* (Knopf), exploring the same New Age/spiritualist territory we've been exploring recently, with a similarly "semi-skeptical" stance. Of course we're flattered by *Esquire's* acknowledgment of us, but if you're reading this, Michael, how about sending us a story?

INSIDE THE ZONE

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at TZ's Newest Incarnation

by J. Michael Straczynski



Chapter One:
The Door Reopens

As Constant Readers of this magazine may know, *The Twilight Zone* television program will return this September with thirty brand-new half hours produced for first-run syndication. In fall '89, these will be added to the sixty-three half hours aired originally on CBS, for a full syndication package. This brief entry is the opening volley in what will become a series of inside reports on the status, and the making, of the new show.

For those to whom the by-line above may not be familiar, I'm the story editor for this new series, and those who watched the network *Zone* may recall my episode, "What Are Friends For?" In the next issue, we'll delve into the details behind the show's resurrection, with all its attendant strangeness. But for now—the news.

Prior to the strike, by the

Writers Guild of America, about eighteen scripts had been completed, with first and second drafts on another six, and five or so more in outline stage. These include Alan Brennert's adaptation of "The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin and several major surprises that, in the months to come, will be revealed here for the first time anywhere.

As I write this, we are three weeks into shooting, which is taking place at Atlantis Productions in Toronto, Canada. (This is the same studio that produced *Ray Bradbury Theater* for HBO and the USA Network.) The director's cut is in on the first episode, "Extra Innings," written by Tom Palmer, directed by Douglas Jackson, and starring Marc Singer. Everyone involved is exceedingly happy with the results.

Other casting has just been completed, specifically: Bud Cort in "The Trunk,"

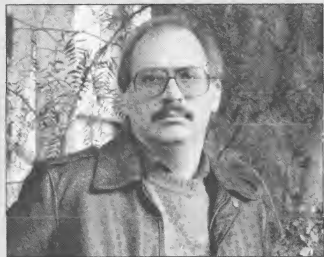
written by Paul Chitlik and Jeremy Finch, directed by Steve DiMarco; Eddie Albert, Barry Morse, and Frances Highland in "Dream Me a Life," written by myself, directed by Allan King; Harry Morgan in "The Curious Case of Edgar Witherspoon," story by myself and Haskell Barkin (who also wrote the teleplay), directed by Rene Bonniere; Louise Fletcher in "Hunters," written by Paul Chitlik and Jeremy Finch, directed by Paul Lynch; and Ted Shackelford in "The Crossing," written by Ralph Phillips and directed by Paul Lynch.

At this time, there are no plans to change the opening title sequence of the series, which will continue to utilize the theme music written by the Grateful Dead. Reluctantly, Charles Aidman will not be returning as the narrator, due to a lack of availability. Robin Ward has been selected to take his place. In order for there to

be consistency between the new and the network episodes, all of the previous narrations are being rerecorded with the new narrator.

The show is being produced by London Films, in conjunction with Atlantis, under the aegis of CBS International and MGM/UA Television. Mark Shermidine is the series' executive producer, and the head of London Films. Shermidine's name may not be immediately familiar, until two words are spoken: *I, Claudius*. London Films was co-producer with the BBC for this superlative British series, and Mark has brought the same desire for high quality to his current enterprise.

NEXT ISSUE: The Revival Begins... The Fate of the "Long" Zones... Skeptical Inquirers... and—Revealed! At Last! The Answer To the Oft-Asked Question, "What Do We Do About Ellison?"



J. Michael Straczynski

ILLUMINATIONS



TZ CLOSE-UP: MARINA SIRTIS

Seeing the Future with
Star Trek: The Next Generation's Resident Alien.

It may surprise TV viewers to learn that actress Marina Sirtis is a very different person than Deanna Troi, the character she portrays on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Sirtis's alter ego, the ship's psychologist/counselor on the hit science fiction show's new, improved *Enterprise*, is a reserved, austere, dignified half-alien with jet-black hair tied back in a bun, a strangely middle-European accent, and psychic/empathic powers. The real-life Sirtis not only has a lively and theatrical manner and a noticeable Cockney accent, her hair is shoulder length and chestnut brown. But she does have two things in common

with Troi: large black eyes and more than a little interest in her own psychic powers.

Born in North London to Greek parents, Sirtis found herself drawn to acting at an early age. By the time she was three, Marina was already entertaining passengers on the buses of her home town. Though her parents disapproved, she followed her feelings, worked odd jobs while a teen to pay for voice and acting lessons and attended the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in England. Following graduation she joined a Shakespearean acting troupe, worked in British theater and television, toured Europe with a stage production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and eventually broke into films with roles in *The Wicked Lady* with Faye Dunaway, and Charles Bronson's *Death Wish III*. Then, after only three weeks in America, she

landed a role in what is now one of the biggest successes in syndicated-television history. Along with the other actors on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Sirtis is well on the way to becoming as famous as the members of the previous program.

Fans of the new show might be startled to discover that Sirtis rarely watched the original show while growing up.

"I'm more of a 'today' kind of person than a 'tomorrow' kind of person, if you know what I mean. I used to watch *Battlestar Galactica* when it was on in England. A lot of the shows on the air here we don't get there. I wasn't a big science fiction fan, I must admit. I was a big *Star Wars* fan, mind you. I used to love those movies and have seen them all about twenty times. Ask me anything about *Star Wars* and I can tell you.

"I've even seen a few *Twilight Zones*, but because we

only have four channels—we only got the last one rather recently—things aren't on for a long time like they are here. Here, you have a lot of air time to fill and we don't. Since there is new stuff being made all the time the old stuff is only on seasonally. I have watched a few of the first *Star Trek* episodes since I've been here. If I'm not called [to the set] at five o'clock in the morning, I might watch it at 11 p.m. It's a weird feeling."

Asked if it disturbed her to be on *Star Trek*, knowing that there was a crew before her in an earlier incarnation and a twenty-plus-year history behind the program, Sirtis answered: "I can remember when I was playing Ophelia in *Hamlet* going to see the movie with Lawrence Olivier and Jean Simmons. It's something you have to get used to as an actor, that other people may have played your role.

"The same goes for the original *Star Trek* series. I find it interesting, but it doesn't bother me either way. I watch it and I think that it was way ahead of its time in certain respects. For TV we're quite ahead of our time as well. I think basically one of the reasons our show is successful is because it is a very good show. The stories by and large are excellent. The cast is, I think, hugely talented. Everyone involved with the show cares about it and wants it to be good."

Sirtis's character, Deanna Troi, is one of the few aliens in the crew, and is a member of a new race to the Federation.

"She's half-humanoid and half-Betazoid, which means she comes from the planet

Betazed," the actress explains. "Her mother was a full Betazoid and her father was a human. The only difference that exists between me and regular humans is that all Betazoids have these big black eyes, which I have. Full Betazoids have their powers tuned to the nth degree. But only being half-Betazoid I don't have the powers to that full extent, so I'm only an empath. I can sense people's feelings or strong emotions but I can't read minds unless I'm very close to that person. We've met my mother on the show, so I can read her mind and we can have conversations mentally. I can sometimes read Commander Riker's [Jonathan Frakes] mind because we had a relationship pre-*Enterprise*. But normally I can just pick up strong emotions."

For Sirtis, preparing for this role wasn't as hard as some might imagine. "Well, I didn't do any research into

how I would do it. It may sound really stupid, but I just did what felt right. In the pilot my powers were much stronger. They've been toned down a bit since then. But basically, I felt the emotions by experiencing them myself.

"When I was auditioning, I was trying out for the part of Tasha Yar. Denise [Crosby] was auditioning for Troi.

Three auditions in they switched us around. The director of the pilot, who was Corey Allen, came up and said to me, 'Look, we're switching you to Troi because we feel you have something as a person that the character has, which is empathy. Just bear that in mind when you're doing the audition.'

"Maybe it's something in me; I know I'm this kind of person that people tell their problems to. People often within a short time of meeting me tell me their life's story. Maybe there is something in

me that led to the switch." (A fortunate switch indeed, as the Yar character she originally tried for is now dead, a casualty of the first season.)

That comfortable feeling, Sirtis senses, might be connected in some way to her own slightly psychic tendencies, and her feelings that all of us have the potential to tap into the kinds of powers that Troi exhibits.

Psychic tendencies?

"Oh, for sure. I even used to have prophetic dreams. Still do, now and then. I'm not sure whether we had the powers and we've lost them, or whether we are developing to the point of getting them now for the first time. I think that we all have an inner voice that is not tapped into. I've had experiences where I was given warning signals and I haven't paid attention to them and then something bad has happened. I think what we have to do is slow down and listen more. We're always rushing around doing things and we never take the time to stop and get the feel of what's going on around us. We should do that more.

"I've had experiences where something I dreamt about actually happened the next day. Four or five years ago I was walking out of the house and I actually thought that I shouldn't have brought this purse out with me. Ten minutes later I was mugged, because I went into this store. I had a lot of money on me that day—the guys in the store saw that, and I walked back out and I was mugged. That's what I mean by warning voices."

—Robert Simpson

Etc.

We said last issue that new uses of a certain term have begun to take on a slightly darker tone. Here's another example:

The *New York Post* for Friday, April 29, 1988. A review of Wim Wenders's new film *Wings of Desire*. The film, shot in Berlin, concerns an angel named Daniel who falls in love with a beautiful trapeze artist. It also features Peter Falk as—Peter Falk (?). The lead? "How do you describe *Wings of Desire*? A boy-meets-girl—or angel-meets-girl—love story? A New Wave Here Comes Mr. Jordan? Or an excursion into the Twilight Zone?..."

"Frog showers, weeping statues and winged cats fill tiny publication," reads the subtitle of an article in the April 25, 1988, edition of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. The AP wire service story, datelined London, examines that venerable journal of the unexplained, the *Fortean Times*. The journal is named after, and follows in the tradition of, the late Charles Fort, an American journalist with a lifelong hobby of collecting material on strange phenomena. (For our own look at Fort, see Peter R. Emshwiller's article in the October '87 issue of *TZ*.)

What makes this article stranger than most, however, is the headline penned for it by an anonymous *Herald Examiner* staffer: "TWILIGHT ZONE, THE MAGAZINE."

That's funny. We thought we were "Twilight Zone, the Magazine!"



PHOTO © 1987 PARAMOUNT PICTURES



THE SPLATTERPUNKS: Center, John Skipp.
Clockwise from top left, Craig Spector, illustrator J. K. Potter,
David J. Schow, *Scream/Press* publisher Jeff Connor.

A "SOMETHING
WICKED
THIS WAY
COMES..."

WARNING TO THE WARY: SOMETHING is happening in horror fiction. Something new. Something disturbing. Something deadly. You might even say "Something wicked this way comes..."

As more traditional forms of horror gain a certain degree of mainstream respectability, a new cutting edge is slicing through the still of the publishing night—a razor-sharp blade dripping blood, drenched in the unholy trinity of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll.

The New Horror is explicit, graphic: dark fantasy with teeth. Fiction where there are no limits.

The New Horror is not nice.

Try this:

The pain was beyond all comprehension. Her whole being strained against the onslaught from the weight of her body sliding down as they hoisted the prop into place. The ligamentous destruction in her wrists and ankles raged against the ropes until the blood ran. They had crucified her, while her own beloved watched, and they had hauled her into a gravitationally excruciating position of blasphemy....

That's from *The Scream* by John Skipp and Craig Spector.

The New Horror is not a comfortable reading experience with reassuring answers. Its writers do not wish to compose a subtle symphony of terrors. It's survivalist horror for the 1990s that reflects the moral chaos of our own times. But beneath its gory surface is an intelligence, an outlaw morality, and a tough humanitarian stance.

INVASION OF THE "SPATTERPUNKS"

The New Horror's most visible practitioners are a rude, unruly lot. Hip to the tendency of culture to instantly stencil labels on nascent movements, they've styled themselves "Spatterpunks" in a deliberate, preemptive strike. [See sidebar.] The Spatterpunks are the shock troops of the New Horror. They write narratives that are played out to the 4-4 beat of rock 'n' roll, the flickering rhythms of inner-city movie palaces.

"Spatterpunk is what happens when we push our own limits to the absolute maximum, to the red line," says Craig Spector, "and dare to look at what lies in the territory we dare not cross."

Skipp and Spector, along with David J. Schow, comprise a sort of "power trio" of Spatterpunk. At first glance, they look more like sidemen from a rock band or extras from *The Lost Boys* than like the leaders of a new literary movement.

INSIDE THE NEW HORROR BY PHILIP NUTMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BETH GWINN



THE "SPLAT PACK": with Spector, Schow, and Skipp (l to r), Joe Lansdale, Richard Christian Matheson, Ray Garton, and Robert R. McCammon.

MY BLACK PAGES

A Basic Reading List of the New Horror

For those who would like to take a look at the New Horror firsthand, below is a preliminary sampling.

Proto-Splatter—Inspirations and Influences:

Richard Matheson
I Am Legend
Theodore Sturgeon
Some of Your Blood
Anthony Burgess
A Clockwork Orange
S. P. Somtow
Vampire Junction

Novelty—Full-Length Horror:

John Skipp and
Craig Spector
The Light at the End
The Clean Up
The Scream
(Bantam Books)
David J. Schow
The Kill Riff
(Tor Books, '88)
Joe R. Lansdale
The Drive In
(Bantam Spectra, '88)
Ray Garton
Live Girls
(Pocket, '87)

My Name Is Legion—
Collections and Anthologies:

Cutting Edge (hc: Doubleday, paper: St. Martin's Press), edited by Dennis Etchison
Silver Scream (hc: Dark Harvest, paper: Tor Books, 1989), edited by David J. Schow
Prime Evil (New American Library hc, '88), edited by Douglas Winter
Scars—And Other Disfiguring Marks (hc: Scream/Press, paper: Tor Books) by Richard Christian Matheson

Press Gang—Publishers of the New Horror

A great number of the New Horror authors are published by small press houses or magazines. For the addresses of these companies, see Bob Morris's "Small Press" column in the June 1988 TZ: Book Publishers
Scream/Press
Dark Harvest
Arkham House
Magazine Publishers
Horror Show
2 AM
Twilight Zone Magazine.

But the look is part of the message. Like rock stars, they thrive on unpredictability and improvisation, technical experimentation, pure balls-to-the-wall high-energy performance, sometimes at the expense of literary polish.

Skip and Spector's first novel, *The Light at the End*, was an audacious hard-core updating of the vampire myth, set in the underground of New York City. Their second novel, *The Cleanup*, was a more ambitious novel of a young vigilante with godlike (or demonic) powers. In the interim, they extended their reputation with the novelization of the film *Fright Night*, and a series of powerful shorter works, including "Shells," "Not with a Whimper," and "Gentlemen."

Their most recent novel, *The Scream*, takes on a heady mix of censorship, right-wing fundamentalism, the emotional scars of Vietnam, and the dark side of heavy-metal occultism. The rock band of the title are the worst nightmare of Tipper Gore and the PMRC, a headbanging group that worship a monstrous Satanic creature and sacrifice groupies to it in the novel's apocalyptic conclusion.

David Schow's debut novel, *The Kill Riff*, is also about rock 'n' roll. It's the story of a clash between a father obsessed with avenging his daughter's death at a rock concert, and the band's leader, who must stop him. Schow describes the novel as a response to "the sort of hyperaccelerated social mutation" that puts rock concerts in places called "arenas" and "coliseums"—"places where, once upon a time, you could go see hapless folks get impaled on tridents and eaten alive by leopards..."

Each of these novels looks at the rock culture from a different viewpoint. Like earlier novels by Skip and Spector, *The Scream* is impressionistic in tone, the prose by turns lean and muscular—and sometimes overwrought. *The Kill Riff* is a cold, hard look at psychopathology, and is photorealistic in style. Both books are bloody, poetic, and like the best films of Sam Peckinpah (*The Wild Bunch*, *Straw Dogs*), use violence as a metaphor for the savagery and brutality that

underlie our lives.

Another key influence on the New Horror is film. A denizen of downtown Hollywood, David Schow is familiar with the streetlife conjured up in the Kinks' classic "Hollywood Boulevard," filled with "celluloid heroes and villains." That world has intruded into much of Schow's best short fiction, including "Coming Soon to a Theatre Near You," "Blood Rape of the Lust Ghouls," his World Fantasy Award-winner "Red Light," and in "The Falling Man," which begins in this issue. More recently, Schow has edited *Silver Scream*, an anthology of cinema-inspired horror. (See Ed Bryant's review in this issue—ED.) John Skipp and Craig Spector are also editing a film-based anthology, *The Book of the Dead*, inspired by George Romero's cult-classic "zombie" films. Together, the two anthologies comprise a sort of manifesto of Splatterpunk, in all its intense, excessive glory, and the authors in the collections form a roll call of the New Horror.

Other members of the "Splatterpunk family" (a sort of literary equivalent of the cannibal clan in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) are Ray Garton, Richard Christian Matheson, Joe R. Lansdale, and, in the visual realm, photosurrealist J. K. Potter. Clive Barker, who developed independently of the Splatterpunks, is a sort of intellectual English cousin, who shares their passion for trashy "B" movies.

Ray Garton's novels are the most traditional in form of the group. *Live Girls*, like *The Light at the End*, revises vampire mythology by placing events in an urban setting—specifically the "sleaze axis" of New York's Forty-Second Street and Times Square. Garton strips away the Gothic trappings of the myth to immerse the reader in a grim, grimy environment that "nickel-and-dimes" the souls of both the living and the dead. Even if his characters are not always well-drawn, his writing conveys a genuine sympathy for the lost souls who inhabit his narratives.

Richard Christian Matheson, on the other hand, is the most audacious, and, in pure literary terms, the most successful stylist of the "Splat Pack." *Scars—and Other Disfiguring Marks*, his anthology of extremely compressed short fiction, is a fine example of his reductionist, experimental approach, a style that has evolved directly from his work as a screenwriter. Every word counts; is used for maximum efficiency. When he is penning a narrative of only four hundred words in length, that efficiency is crucial.

Matheson's thematic concerns in these stories are the various ways in which emotional scars become manifest in physical terms, jumping the synaptic fracture between interpersonal fantasy and internal reality. The writing is highly imagistic, evocative, pointed, and resonant.

Unlike the others (though like Robert R. McCammon, another literary cousin), Texan Joe Lansdale's fiction is rural in setting and tone, yet equally unrelenting in both form and content. His characters speak with authentic Southern voices that come to life in much the same way Stephen King's Maine inhabitants do. Much of Lansdale's power comes from his easy shifting from humor to terror, from laugh to scream. Just behind these are the New Horror's "next wave," writers including A. R. Morlan, Steven Boyette, Melissa Mia Hall, and Mark Arnold, pushing the limits even further.

THE NEW FLESH

Where did the New Horror come from? First, consider this. Fantasy rehearses reality, trains the mind in the skills needed to survive—the way roughhouse play prepares a wolf cub for the hunt.

Splatterpunks are the trailing edge of the post-war baby boom, raised in the spectral shadow of the atom bomb, the hipswagger of Elvis, the mutated rhythm-and-

blues boogie of the Rolling Stones, consumerism, film, TV. Their story is a story of hopes betrayed—the failure of the peace-and-love ideal, the rise of the in-your-face nihilism of punk music, pornography, rampant drug abuse.

Raised in the consciousness-expanding sixties, they were told "All You Need Is Love." It was a chemically charged era, both metaphorically and literally (cannabis, LSD, napalm, Agent Orange), when humanity and creativity seemed to surge forward. The underlying call was "We Have the Answers." The dominant fantasy was Utopia—2001, Middle Earth, The Age of Aquarius. Their symbols were those of gentleness and passivity: bright colors, long hair, flowers.

But the light of that fantasy was eclipsed by a bad moon rising. The Age of Aquarius died stillborn when Meredith Hunter was knifed to death by a group of Hell's Angels while the Rolling Stones performed on stage at the Altamont Speedway. The Manson Family slaughtered actress Sharon Tate and friends in Hollywood. And the young men of America were being shipped home in boxes as the war in Nam continued.

Many of the older "boomers" cast off their tie-dyed tee shirts, smocks, and beads in favor of suits and skirts to become entrepreneurs, "Me Decade" yuppies making up for lost time, conforming to existing social structures rather than continuing to try to change the world.

A decade after the Summer of Love came the Winter of Hate—the dawn of the New Flesh. From England came punk rock—the Sex Pistols and the Dead Kennedys. The fantasy was apocalyptic—the symbols those of aggression: leather, studs, spikes, pins. The siblings of the Flower Power generation spat in their elders' faces, donned aggressive trappings as an external display of "attitude," and took to the street to kick around the moribund corpse of rock 'n' roll that had become as soft and bloated as Elvis in his final days. This time the shout was not "We Have the Answers," but "We Don't Care."

The epithet "Splatterpunk" was coined by David Schow as an ironic, media-hip counterpart to "Cyberpunk," the name author and editor Gardner Dozois bestowed on William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and the rest of science fiction's "new wave" of the eighties.

"Splatter-flick" was the name of choice for the vivid, gory no-holds-barred makeup-effects feasts like *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *The Evil Dead*. "Punk" (defined in the dictionary as "young, undesirable") was the deliberately self-deprecating term eighties rockers used for the crude, energetic musical style they used to repudiate the arty excesses of seventies pop. Put the two words together and you have a catchy, provocative handle that's pure horrorshow in attitude.

It's already provoked a reaction (not always pleasant) among those the "Splat Pack" call the "tweed jacket and leather elbow patches set," some of whom seem threatened by the fact that "quiet" horror gets less ink than "loud" horror. But the Splatterpunks seem to realize just how ephemeral all of this image-mongering really is.

"Splatterpunk is an angle of attack," says John Skipp. "A way of life. And just a phase we're going through..."



SUBCONSCIOUS SABOTEURS: "As a style, Splatterpunk is often gross, usually extreme, and always visceral."

The creators of the New Horror came of age in the DMZ between these two social revolutions. They were more influenced by music, movies, and pop culture than by traditional literature. As David Schow put it in his conversation with Craig Spector on rock 'n' roll, horror, and the "cultural mulch" (TZ, Dec. '86), "We absorbed it all directly as kids because we had no defenses built in yet, no ideals in place to be violated. One result is that we've developed a more cynical coping mechanism. It's got a real brutal edge to it, an almost defiant vision."

Several mainstream horror films of the 1970s contributed to the atmosphere that made the New Horror possible, including *The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Jaws*, and *Carrie*. As cultural phenomena, they were noteworthy in their ability to disturb and shock, to trigger an emotional response, and to reach much wider audiences with their intense imagery than had ever been reached before.

But George Romero's 1968 classic, *Night of the Living Dead*, is the primordial Splatterpunk movie, the horror film that signalled the end of the stately, Gothic tale of terror, and the beginning of a more ruthless school of hard-edged filmmaking. Along with Tobe Hooper's drive-in classic, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the cult films of Herschell Gordon Lewis (2000 *Maniacs* and *The Wizard of Gore*, for example), and

Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*, Romero's "zombie" films contributed two essential elements to the mix; gory, on-screen graphic violence (the "splatter" in "splatter-flicks"), and an amoral world view where evil cannot be easily contained.

This more explicit visual vocabulary, combined with the defiant stance of eighties rock 'n' roll, gave the New Horror its aesthetic focus. Yet behind the explicit, taboo-breaking dynamics and cinematic pyrotechnics is something more. The New Horror is a literature of synthesis that attempts to create a fusion of the humanitarian idealism of the sixties and the amped-up, aggressive pragmatism of the eighties.

FIRE WITH FIRE

Horror, at its best, should perform two functions: to probe taboos, and to make flesh of metaphor. "Quiet" horror does this; it can chill the spine, unsettle the imagination, make our deepest impulses manifest. But it doesn't depth-charge the emotions the way the New Horror can. The New Horror wants to provoke an emotional response, to go straight for the jugular vein.

"I think our task as a species is to work out a moral ground that's solid and consistent with people's real lives," says John Skipp. "That involves taking apart the old systems

very meticulously to find out what works and what's horse flop. To find something that really works in the face of increasingly complex and mad times is very high on the agenda."

"As a style, Splatterpunk is often gross, usually extreme, and always visceral," says Craig Spector. "You may love it, you may hate it, but it's damned hard to read it and be unmoved. That's its job: to shock complacency, to attack the neutral reaction, to challenge conventional wisdom and morality, to stimulate the dialogue. When we're at our best, we are fiction's subconscious saboteurs, laying mines behind enemy lines."

"When we write this hideous horror stuff we're throwing the reality of the *anatomy* of violence in the reader's face," says John Skipp. "We believe that helps the reader to make

those hard choices. By pushing the limits of our awareness, we're better equipped to make real choices."

The New Horror is deliberately provocative. It's geared toward forcing its audience to interact with it.

"Someone said to me recently that the reader should do half the work," comments Richard Christian Matheson. "Actually, I believe they should do more than that."

"The idea is," adds Spector, "the reader picks up the book, and he or she has no idea how bad it's going to get, how far it's going to go. A lot of readers do feel bushwhacked by that element of surprise, but horror should—and must—punch nerves."

The crux of all this is the question of personal responsibility, how we deal with an increasingly hostile environment,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 85

PHILIP NUTMAN—"SPLATTER-CRITIC"

A media journalist who specializes in fantastic film, Philip Nutman is British Correspondent for the horror-film magazine *Fangoria*, has contributed to *Penthouse*, *Segno Cinema*, and *Shock Xpress*, and was recently made "American Editor" of the new British magazine *Fear*.

He is also a filmmaker, scriptwriter, and actor, having recently made his on-screen debut in the soon-to-be-released *Tin Star Void*, in which he plays a villain.

The movie, a postmodern rock 'n' roll western, was shot in Connecticut early this year, and features cameos by John Skipp and Craig Spector as a couple of sleazy mercenary types. The two have also contributed music to the soundtrack.

In the film Nutman plays the bad guy's right-hand man, a scumbag of sorts who goes by the name of Tough. The part started as a three-scene role but promptly grew into a full supporting character. Nutman also was asked to write two short transitional scenes for the film.

"Tom Gniazdowski, the director, suggested I should kill off some more people," he explains. "Fortunately, John and Craig were in Connecticut for a signing session so we managed to get them for one night. In the scene they piss my character off so he kills them by gutting John with a switchblade and by blowing Craig away with a high-tech shotgun. It's a first: a 'splatter-critic' gets to act out his convictions." The film is due for video release this winter. True to form, Skipp and Spector are credited as Splatterpunks #1 and #2.

Next year Nutman joins the New Horror's "Next Wave" as a writer. 1989 will see publication of at least three of his short stories, two nonfiction film books, and possibly a novel. "That's if I have the time to finish it," he adds. "I'm contracted to do two screenplays by December, and am trying to complete the first draft of a science fiction novel entitled *Armageddon Bop*, which I'm co-writing with Peter Juzl, a friend of long standing."

Clive Barker was instrumental in getting him to write fiction. "Clive gave me a kick up the backside when he said, 'Stop talking about it, write something!' which was just the kind of thing I needed to hear at the time. So whatever the results, you can blame him."

The solo novel, *Ties that Bind*, is a suspense thriller with splatterpunk undertones, and has already attracted the interest of two U.S. publishing houses.



DAVID J. SCHOW

THE FALLING MAN

PART I



It has been said that those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad. Case in point, one Peter Deutsch, a man heading for a fall in that haunted hall of mirrors known as Hollywood. . . .

IN THE MAJOR ARCANA OF THE TAROT THERE exists an almost forgotten twenty-third card.

The known cards are called "keys," and are said to correspond with each of the Paths of Life, or to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Fool has no number; it is the card that melds the ends of the circle of twenty-one. The Fool is generally depicted as an inexperienced youth about to step off the edge of a precipice, denoting the passage into maturity and the need to choose a philosophy—to gain wisdom or embrace the bliss of ignorance.

The forgotten card is The Falling Man. It stands outside the unending circle formed by the cards of the Major Arcana. It is a wild card, a skeleton "key." Its subject is the victim of irresistible forces of chaos, caprice, or circumstance. Reversed, it denotes concealed manipulation and too much control.

Catching The Falling Man in your Tarot throw was like having your car

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID CELSI





totalled by an uninsured illegal alien. It was the one card that forced readers to dissemble, and soften their evaluations. Their eyes would avert, because the eyes cannot lie and make things better.

So, as with all unresolvable irritants, *The Falling Man* was swept under the rug. But it is as unfailing a force as the gravity it depicts, and its influence persists in defiance of historical subterfuge, touching each of us to this day.

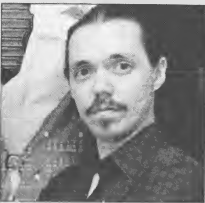
THE ROLODEX CARD WAS YELLOW AT THE borders with age, and the little man thumbed it up just as the grandfather clock in his office bonged out midnight in sour brass tones.

He released a tiny *pah* noise of disgust and hoisted himself from his desk chair, which creaked as his spatted high-button shoes slapped the floor. Standing, he was no taller than he had been while sitting. He fought his way over to the clock, battling the sheer clutter of the claustrophobic eyrie in which he had secreted himself. Old habits of residence were difficult to change. His progress across the rathole cubicle kicked up a wake of dust, and made a legion of tiny insects interrupt their literary dining to scatter. Antiques and geegaws packed the room, and the grandfather clock presided over its darkest corner like an ancient idol. Both the clock and the railroad watch the little man wore on a fob read nine-thirty.

He dealt the side of the clock a savage kick that made the chimes with-in clatter rudely. Loose gears rattled and a terrified mouse fled the premises.

UPDATE:

DAVID J. SCHOW



As the accompanying article on "The New Horror" indicates, David J. Schow is rapidly gaining a name as one of the most exciting new talents in the field. Longtime readers of *Twilight Zone* saw it coming.

He recognized
Alea's signature,
and his heart
began revving.
She had come
back. Adrenaline
punched through
his system, making
him giddy.

Then the mid-range tubular gong sounded once—the half-hour toll.

The little man wore a gray pin-striped suit with tails, a silken vest, and an ascot. His brushed top hat hung on a peg overlooking the desk, and was the sole part of the ensemble not spattered in white plaster dust. The Reverend Charles Dodgson might have asked the little man to pose on the spot.

Along the obstacle course leading back to the desk, the little man paused to peer out a congested, porthole-like window. The entire city of Los Angeles stretched away below, a quilt of light chasing the horizon in every direction. The view was one of the reasons he had maintained this office, away from the

Dave Schow has been a regular TZ contributor since his story "Pulpmeister" appeared here in December 1982. Since then, he's written over a dozen short works, including "Red Light," (TZ, December '86), and "Pamela's Get" (TZ, August '87). His first novel, *The Kill Riff*, is just out from Tor Books, and he's currently at work on his second, *The Shaft*. *Silver Scream*, the cinematic horror anthology he edited, is just out from Dark Harvest, and he has new stories coming up in the new horror magazine *Midnight Graffiti*, Ed Gorman's *Stalker* anthology, Joe Lansdale's *Razored Saddles*, and *The Book of the Dead*. Future publications include "Seeing Red," a short story collection; *Lost Angels*, a collection of novellas including "Pamela's Get," "Brass," and "The Falling Man," and a third novel, tentatively titled *Gore Movie*.

eyes of the world, for so long.

"Mm-hm. Yes, indeed." The little man had developed the habit of cataloging things to himself in a mumbled undertone. It was a personal monologue with an audience of one. "Aahh." The urban view replenished him. Perhaps it was the thought of all those electric lights, and all the lives upon which they shone.

Back at the desk, he glanced at the foxed Rolodex card, then let it drop to the blotter. He wrested open a persistently sticking drawer and rummaged. To the light he lifted a delicate masque of blue glass. Attached near the right eye was a slender, wand-like stick, for holding the masque to one's face. Its features were feminine; its eyes, blank holes deftly cut in the glass.

"Very good," the little man said to himself.

As he sat to resume work, he switched on a refrigerator-sized Victrola radio and hummed along with Bruce Springsteen. Because he was doing what he was best at, he smiled pleasantly as he worked.

AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT, PETER Deutsch stepped back from the waiting elevator doors and let the car go up empty. He took the stairs. His entire day had been spent in boxes just like the elevator of his apartment building; chrome and glass cells that hummed and conveyed him from one meeting to the next, with black commas of ground-out cigarette butts punctuating the utility tile of their floors. It was seven floors up and he was wrung out, but Peter wanted to walk.

The stairwell was another box, an enclosure of steel and stone, a clean, well-lighted place. *Thank you, Papa Hemingway.* A box just like all the conference rooms in the Studio City bowl, where it was rumored the majors constructed their monoliths with movable walls, so that hapless employees could discover their need for fresh jobs by clocking in to offices that had become blank walls. They did not just change the names on the doors; they dispensed with entire rooms, as easily as twisting a new face onto a Rubik's Cube.

Peter had not lost his job, but his patience was waving good-bye. He had spent—no, *invested*—a shifter of a day battling his skull against the concrete stupidity of TV moguls and their yes-persons. Preproduction arguments over the TV-movie *Sinner* had been raging for eight weeks; the script was in its ninth rewrite. Peter could only compare the erosion of his soul to spending a year in court. His sanity was being swiped a

chip at a time. His creativity had retreated, shrieking, behind a massive writer's block. Today *Sinner* had been passed on to the third in a series of pinch hitters, not counting the husband-and-wife team who had conceived the original script and would now get a "story by" credit. Peter was still to direct. Wasn't that what everyone in Hollywood supposedly *really* wanted—to direct?

Like everyone else embroiled in *Sinner* from the publicity flacks on up, Peter was trapped, hemmed in by contract boilerplate, committed to work in which he had, today, lost the last vestiges of interest. "A sizzling look at the real power plays in the boardrooms and bedrooms of high finance," *Sinner* was glitz-encrusted bullshit from head to toe. All jiggle and soap and lies, with all the right advertisers to buttress that all-important American consumer ethic. *Sinner* perpetuated the dumb myth that if you weren't wealthy and wasteful and wanton, you were just *nobody*, dahling.

Peter had spent the day being poisoned by that mind-set, and no purgatives offered themselves as he plodded upward. The climb was the only way he could ascend on a day like this. He pushed out self-pity and began brewing a full pot of anger. He should have taken the goddamned elevator.

Thirteen steps. Turn. Thirteen more. Tucked into his armpit was the junk mail he had pried from the gangbox downstairs. On the fourth-floor landing he let his leather brief drop to the waffled metal and paused to squint at what the stack had to offer. The stairwell floods afforded harsh light. The abundance of trash—YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY WON \$50,000!!—was balanced by the sinking certainty that another twenty-four hours had just passed without a peep from Damon about the independent-feature backing he was busy scaring up in Vancouver. Another day without the Mailgram or phone call that would permit Peter to chuck *Sinner* with what the good old Romans termed the *digitus obscenus*. On Damon Fletcher's say-so Peter would be packed and northbound to "do us some art." It was a joke. *Objet d'Art* was the title of the project; the screenplay collaboration that had wrapped both men up in the embrace of true love. If the money came through and the picture got made, there was no doubt that a distributor would rail at the farsty title and change it to *Art Object*, or maybe *Lewd Mating Positions*. The magic word was *saleable*. Just now, the challenge was creating the film, not what to call it when it was whole.

But the wonderful world of direc-

DAVID J. SCHOW

THE FALLING MAN

tors' hats held no laughter for Peter today. He thumbed desultorily through the balance of the mail stack.

He would have ignored the folded page as a shopping center flyer if he hadn't spied the red wax seal holding the page ends together in an envelope shape. Then he registered the weight, the quality of the thick, linen-grain stationery. There was no Addressograph label, no stamp. It had been inserted into the box apart from the mail delivery. Peter gave it his full attention for another thirteen steps.

The icon embossed into the cold wax was unfamiliar to Peter. At a glance it appeared to be a woodcut outline of a human figure, arms extended, apparently in flight. He used his thumbnail to pry the seal away without breaking it. He shifted the briefcase to his other hand and halted on the stairs in order to tilt the page to the light to read the precise black script.

It was a poem, to him.

He recognized the paraph of Alea's signature before he was a third of the way through the verse, and his heart began revving. She had come back. Serious adrenaline began to punch through his system, making him giddy in a hurry. He smiled, and then bounded up the remaining tiers of metal stairs, his chance at fifty thousand dollars fluttering into the narrow, dark abyss between the flights.

AS HE OPENED THE DOOR HIS EYES WERE astung. So was his mind. She knew of his fondness for candles. At least a hundred were very carefully burning in his living room. Still buzzing from the stairway fluorescents, his eyes took in meager golden light. There was just enough to see his way by; no more.

He knew better than to call out her

name. A trail had been left.

He dropped his jacket into the darkness where he knew a table to be; he grimaced as he heard it slide off and meet the floor. A marble pedestal had been deprived of its Kleinst nude sculpture and repositioned in the front door's sightline, halfway across the sunken circle of the living room. On it were a tall yellow taper, burning in a pewter holder, a crystal flute of what he took to be Mumms 1979 Rene Lalou from past experience, and a note, on the same linen paper, folded into a pup-tent shape. Peter became aware from the pain in his cheeks that he was grinning like a fool.

Finish Glass before leaving Table.

Remove coat, shoes, socks. Tie optional. Proceed to Kitchen.

On the butcher block table in the kitchen were an identical candle, glass, and note. He felt less nervous about all the burning candles when he saw, close up, the care that had been taken to cup them and provide for wax drainage. All his tinfoil had been used up. While the first glassful of bubbly fizzed coldly away in his stomach, he lifted and sipped the second. By the time the second was down, the first was speeding to his head. No dinner. Too late now, and who cared? He unfolded the next note.

Bring uncracked Bottles from Fridge.

Proceed to Hall.

By now Peter's fear of hidden fire inspectors had mysteriously evaporated. His coatrack had been moved to the hallway, and on it hung his chocolate-colored bathrobe. His fingers tingled when he tipped the third glass to his mouth. A very pointed trail of evenly spaced candles lit the path to his bedroom.

If you are still wearing Clothes, please discard them on the Rack provided. Finish Glass and proceed at once to the Final Room.

The door lay ajar by three tantalizing inches. His glass in one hand and the two champagne bottles in the other, he nudged the door open with his knee. The bed was a gigantic four-poster job in waxed ebony. Dark sheets. No silk or satin trap; that was strictly for the officer passion-pit mentality. The corners of the room were unfathomably dark. Several strategic candles threw almost imperceptible highlights.

The big bed was empty.

He was two paces into the room when she pounced from behind, whirling him around into a kiss so thorough that both the bottles and the empty flute hit the carpet. She gathered him into her arms, working at him, wanting

him so hard that she had to hold him in place to keep him from falling. They stayed that way for a long time. Then she broke away and pulled back just far enough to let him see her hold a finger to her lips before she retrieved the wine and drew him closer to the bed. Talk, its questions and details and problems, was for later.

Tired? He could feel electricity crackling from the tips of his fingers, his toes....

They did not hurry, like eager but inept children. They had time, and their hunger did the rest. Elsewhere, beyond their hearing, was the studied chuckle of a little old man.

"I THINK I'M FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU."

That was the last thing she had said to him, the last time they had made love, five months ago, the night before she had vanished with no preamble and no heartrending but oh-so-predictable note. Once he had tried to nail her down on who, she really was, what she really did for her living, she evanesced out of his life. The days had elapsed one slow century of hurt at a time, long enough for Peter to conclude that the dormant emotions she had kicked back to life in him were just the usual Peter Deutsch overreaction. Hollywood hyperbole. That decided, he had to then deny the *rightness* of the things she had told him, the unspoken validity of the small, telling things she did for him. He had to abort the changes and resonances begun within himself. Opening up—to anybody—was contrary to his will, and when he noticed his own willing vulnerability, he resisted.

His ex-wife Kathryn had cared not at all for such subtleties of temperament; to him, it was a costly emotional effort; to her, it was too little too goddamned late. She did not wish to entertain Peter's feeble tries at dropping his shields. Alea honestly wanted to help. She nurtured, never coaxing. It was proof that she was different, and this scared him. To Peter it was a natural fear, and she had anticipated this, and come prepared to defang it. Peter would have dismissed such reassurances from anyone else, including Kathryn, as saccharine. In the real world no one bothered to help the way Alea did. That final night, Peter had told her he loved her; the words were a giant step for him. Hours later she was gone, and he reminded himself of another of his old personal rules: You only sabotage the relationships that are the most important to you. Then came the days sunk in poisonous meditation, the mental scourging. The bitterness returned and settled in for a

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long stay. His insectile plates of emotional armor began their inevitable recrystallization. Then came *Sinner*.

At her note, he had come running. There was still that much left.

SHE MOVED ABOVE HIM IN A SLOW AND SINUOUS way that nibbled his control down to nothing. Her hair, in a brisk chop, made bangs, framed her face, and hid her eyes. He hauled in a deep breath as tremors bucked him, and grasped her rolling hips. The last thing he saw before he shut his own eyes was her smile, the lower lip nibbled between her teeth. Maddening sounds started somewhere deep inside her; furry little noises of pleasure issuing from the core of the diaphragm and flowing up and out like dark wine. They were as unique as her scent, her taste, her movements. She knew what she was doing. And she knew just how to do Peter Deutsch.

THEY HAD ONLY ARGUED ONCE. IT HAD BEEN a disagreement manufactured by Peter (who had been known to defend the faulty side of a question merely to gratify his debate *imp*—more fallout from the competitive mind-set). The topic was long lost; what Peter would always remember was the way it had concluded. When it had become hopeless and repetitive, she had said, "Peter, you're wrong, you know it, and I am going to crown you with an ashtray... if you don't start making love to me in the next sixty seconds."

That had knocked his pins out, all right. If he could train a film crew to perform with the unerring sense of timing Alea exploited so casually in her speech, he would be in the cockpit of the smoothest-running, most envied machine in the industry.

Alea had manifested shortly after the shipwreck of Peter's marriage. Mrs. Kathryn Deutsch had moved on to become a power broker in Malibu real estate. Dissolution was the mere breaking of a contract; SOP in Hollywood. You broke one pact to ink another, better one. Peter walled himself up behind twenty-hour workdays, not sleeping so much as lapsing into an exhausted coma close to predawn. One day he jolted awake, sheened in panic sweat, as though surfacing from an unsavory nightmare. His eyes opened and he found himself surrounded by *acquaintances* instead of friends, manipulators in the chairs of allies, and vampires leering from behind the lies that had admitted them into his bed, his Day Timer, his life.

The albatrosses pecked at his eyes. There was no one to cling to and no place to flee.

Then, Alea. *Timing*. Clichés had never applied to his life before.

BEING WITH HER NOW BROUGHT A LUNATIC sensation of effervescent optimism. The moguls in their steel boxes became a straw threat, insubstantial, unreal. Fatigue ran away and was supplanted by vigor. Being inside of her solved his problems, made him feel...

Safe.

He gasped when he felt her muscles lock him up down there, almost as an expression of his very thoughts. He was staying.

It was against logic, of course, but he had penetrated her in a way that surpassed the physical juxtapositions of mere fucking. Sunk into her, impossibly secure, his limbs and brain charged themselves with psychic strength from the lode she offered. Until it was his turn.

He pushed himself up and kept hold of her hips, pulling her aboard his lap. She grabbed his shoulders to lift herself, and began to drive herself onto him, the gradual increase in sensitivity to friction making her cry out, as though fighting against the new climax. He felt every contraction along with the lush pulse of her blood. She fell back without resistance, one of her throats, quiet laughs expelling from her lips, and he stayed with her. One more thrust into that loving grip was all it took to completely divorce him from rational thought.

The shorter candle stubs began to wink out in the way dead suns, far away, extinguish themselves and become nonexistent in a second.

THE DWARF SELECTED A SPATULATE BLADE and carefully planed blood-colored clay from the monster's right shoulder.

Strewn about the litter of the studio

were current issues of *Cosmopolitan*, *Self*, *Working Woman*, *Mademoiselle* and more, all open to advertisements featuring male models. Here were the lions that women-conscious sponsors chose to sell their products to the feminine half of the population. Studly-yet-sensitive. Wild-but-secure. Artistic-yet-upwardly mobile. To the monster, the dwarf gave the nose of one, the cruel-but-kissable lips of another, the crush cut of a third. He paged from one glossy spread to another until he located perfect toes. He needed muscular-but-not-steroidal pecs and triceps. The easiest item to scare up was a great butt.

On no page could the dwarf find worthwhile eyes. All were metallic, dead, detached. Billboard entrepreneurs favored that uncaring look. The dwarf's artistic sensibilities were abraded; he gazed into the robot eyes of these thoroughbred fashion plates and felt all men objectified.

As he carved, he hummed, taking his time, spacing out his snifters of Napoleon brandy to make the last bottle stretch to the conclusion of this current commission. His specially mixed medium was cool and pliable, receptive to the even strokes of the blade. He smoothed rough patches with spit and a gentle finger. Each caress nudged the monster closer to his visualization; each touch of those cigar-stub fingers brimmed not only with schooled sculpting talent, but with genuine love. Soft curlicues of clay rimmed the worktable and stuck to the leather soles of the dwarf's shoes. More than once he leapt onto the table to loom over his creation, rubbing flaws to sleekness, his touch leaving heat trails. The living molding the inanimate, delighting in the friction of contouring the common into something extraordinary. He gave the mouth a succulent downward turn. He made both nostrils exactly the same size and shape—that was a detail you never found in real people, one even the most perceptive would fail to notice.

M. Rogoff would notice, and applaud his audacity.

The dwarf scooped a handful of fresh clay from the pail and added it to the monster's penis, kneading it to the proper proportion. On a whim he spit some brandy into it. He decided against omitting the foreskin.

When the brandy flask was down to the depth of a finger, there remained the riddle of what to do about the monster's eyes. All options seemed cold and predictable. The diminutive sculptor laid down his tools before he attempted too much, and messed up what perfection he had already wrought.

DAVID J. SCHOW

THE FALLING MAN

He blew his nose loudly on his denim apron and rinsed his hands in a tub sink installed low to the floor. The arrangement of the studio, with its body on the slab, held ghostly overtones of an autopsy theatre.

He used a potter's cut-off needle to pry clay from beneath his nails, and felt a perverse urge to snap a few Polaroids of his new work. The terms of his verbal contract forbade a visual record. M. Rogoff's instructions were as precise as ever, and from experience the dwarf knew them to be well-founded. Contracts such as these were best honored.

Perhaps more brandy might lubricate the artistic faculties, he thought with a sly grin. But when he fished into one capacious trouser pocket, all he brought up was a noisy bunch of small change.

At first his eyes dismissed the pair of bright, newly minted copper pennies. Then his attention shot back to target them. They were pristine, lacking scratches or tarnish; they released a musical jingle when he tossed them about in his small palm, contemplating. His heartbeat sped up, and he wondered if the great genius M. Toulouse-Lautrec had ever felt similarly flushed with joy at such a lightning stroke of inspiration!

Humming once more, he dashed the last of the brandy into his glass, and returned to the worktable. He would be able to finish tonight. Then he could contact M. Rogoff.

This was shaping into grand sport indeed.

PETER WANTED TO HOLD HER HAIR IN HIS teeth. He embraced her with his arms, his legs, tactile evidence of how long he had starved, how badly he needed someone. He clung. Alea slept.

It had not been an endurance run

or point-scoring session. Peter was well-versed in the dance steps of the sexual-politic superstructure of this town, and if need be he could play that in-and-out game with the best. This wasn't that. The points emphasized by their love-making struck him as healthy ones.

He remembered what he had labeled her when he first saw her.

THE THEME OF THE CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD party is Business Is Pleasure. The talented and monied are shoved into elbow-rubbing distance; the mechanism is greased with expensive eats, lots of free alcohol, controlled substances, and the usual catalog of incentives. Peter thought of a chess match with all the players in seedy rented tuxes; the pawns in the game were the hookers, the coke, the prurient come-on to sign one's name. Self-important introductions were made between future bedfellows...amid future bedmates.

Peter had reported for duty at Damon Fletcher's insistence. *Slap on your happy mask*, Damon repeated all the time. *It never hurts to meet the execs*. He relished thrusting, parrying, coercing. The lies he ran past producer-types slid right off his carapace. Peter had felt conscripted; his visibility would buttress Damon's huckstering. Tonight Peter did not feel like a player. He knew he would suffer this soiree and probably not even get to hang out with Damon all that much. Damon never let his own moves dirty his psyche—to him, it was lying to liars, stealing from thieves. Peter always wanted to bathe afterward. But he let himself be badgered into attending. That was how badly he wanted to make *Objet D'Art* with his fast friend.

All they needed was...well, it was obvious, or Peter never would have rung the doorbell.

The clockwork ground into motion and by one a.m. was clanking purposefully along like a wind-up Godzilla toy. Peter smiled at strangers and powered down straight bourbon, instantly gaining an axe-murder of a headache. At Damon's bidding he bared his teeth and shook the proper hands. When Damon was swallowed by the hurly-burly of happy-hour negotiations, Peter stayed behind, a marionette with clipped strings. It was for the best. His bullshit allergy was raging tonight, and he knew he would only muddy whatever pond he stepped into.

He retreated to the far end of a vast flagstone patio, where he could be alone with the rainbow brilliance of Los Angeles spread out below him. He felt pleased with himself in that fatalistic,

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Animals

EIGHT TWENTY-FIVE. HE SHOULD HAVE left for work ten minutes ago, and he still had to walk the stupid dog.

He snarled with impatience and snapped MacDoodle's leash on. The dog was right in the way, as usual, gyrating in red-setter excitement. Eddie muscled him aside long enough to unchain the apartment door.

"If your owner wasn't my best friend I'd take you downtown and lose you," he threatened MacDoodle. "Good thing for you he's getting back tonight." Eddie was anticipating Jeff's return from vacation. The beer was already in the fridge, and the Mets would be

A cautionary tale about a man named Eddie who's about to learn that "Be Kind to Animals" is more than a noble sentiment. It's a matter of life and death....

ELIZABETH MITCHELL

ILLUSTRATION BY
ROGER DE MUTH

Animals

playing Chicago.

MacDoodle pulled him down the brownstone steps and straight for his favorite tree, a struggling Chinese elm the city had planted two years ago and ignored ever since. Someone had hung a hand-lettered sign on its trunk: A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN—LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY. PLEASE WALK PETS ELSEWHERE.

Others appeared to have honored this sentiment; grass grew luxuriantly under the elm. Eddie ignored it. MacDoodle had decorated the little plot six times so far. The dumb dog wasn't Eddie's own, after all; he was there strictly on sufferance. In return, Jeff had promised him a Stetson hat direct from Dallas—and tonight Eddie would get it.

Eight twenty-nine. Wouldn't you know: today the idiot dog only watered the elm. Maybe he was holding out for the empty lot up the street, next to the limestone monstrosity Eddie called the Witch's House. He started dragging MacDoodle up the block.

Along the way they investigated every vertical object. Sniff, sniff; whiz, whiz; male dogs seemed to produce an endless supply of liquid waste. Eddie had no time to appreciate the capacity this morning. He was due at a staff meeting at ten o'clock and his notes still weren't in order.

PROFILE:

ELIZABETH MITCHELL

Like David Schow, Betsy Mitchell is an editor as well as a writer. She is currently on "R&R" after five years at Baen Books, where she was Senior Editor of Science Fiction and Fantasy, working with many of the field's best-known talents, and edited four volumes in the "Alien Stars" series of original sf novellas.

This is her second fiction sale; the first, "Samizdat," was published in *Analog SF* in 1984. Now that she has time to turn to her own writing (both fiction and non-), she vows: "I plan to avoid every authorial mistake ever made. ... I hope."

Mitchell also enjoys traveling, gardening, and other Yuppie-like pursuits, and is the proud owner of an elderly Brooklyn brownstone.

She is the owner of two cats, with whom she is on good terms.

Perhaps a little exercise would stimulate the old GI tract. "Let's go, boy!" he said with forced heartiness. MacDoodle gave him a toothy grin and broke into a trot, idiotically tripping over his front feet and nearly bringing Eddie down on top of him. A little girl carrying schoolbooks giggled at them. Eddie cursed under his breath. Stupid rug-rat.

CURB YOUR DOG. AVOID \$50 FINE. There was another of those damned signs, this one mounted by the city on a streetlight pole. For once Eddie felt sympathy with MacDoodle. Why should any dog have to squat in the street when there was green grass nearby? People should fence their lawns off if they didn't want them used.

They panted up to the end of the block. Across the street was a run-down old parking garage that normally had filled up by this hour. This morning it was a scene of disaster.

The roof had collapsed. Apparently an enormous wooden beam supporting the center span had rotted away. A vast weight of tar paper and rusted girders had fallen into the garage below, crushing several expensive cars that Eddie could see and trapping others in back corners. One end of the center beam had burst through the front wall, taking a row of windows with it. Bricks were cascaded across the sidewalk. A row of sawhorses stenciled **POLICE LINE—DO NOT CROSS** barricaded that side of the street.

So this was what all the sirens had been about, Eddie thought. Sirens were among the noises he had trained himself to sleep through unless they were shrieking directly under his window. At six-thirty this morning he had merely punched his pillow and turned over.

Various neighbors were regarding the debris with wonder, including the cute girl from three houses up. Eddie watched her surreptitiously until she clicked away on her high heels toward the subway. Finally, then, he remembered MacDoodle.

The idiot dog had completely ignored the vacant lot. He had deposited his morning load on the sidewalk... directly in front of the Witch House. And glaring down from the top step was the witch herself.

Or so Eddie had dubbed her. Her real name he had never heard, but he knew she had a running feud with almost everyone on the block. He'd heard her quarreling with the Dominican guy who owned the bodega over the quality of his produce, the family across the street about their four noisy children, the punks around the corner with their heavy-metal guitars. As far as Eddie knew, her only friend was the funeral-home man; he saw them chatting occasionally under his awning.

Her house certainly fit the part. It was a decrepit old place with a corner turret and bow windows, the only one like it on the block. The old woman lived there alone with her cats, though in this neighborhood she could have made a mint as a landlord. As far as Eddie could tell she didn't use the first or second floors; only the turret room ever showed a light. One of the basement windows had a cat-door cut into it for the use of her numerous companions.

So far Eddie himself had managed to avoid the old lady, though he had on occasion hissed at the cats as they headed for their door. He had no friends on the block and no enemies; to him the neighborhood meant a place to sleep where he could afford the rent. And he'd wasted enough time this morning on inconsequential. MacDoodle was finally finished. It was time to go to work.

He gathered up the leash, carefully ignoring the offensive blot on the sidewalk, and started to drag the setter home. Suddenly, though, it was as if an invisible hand seized him. He felt himself turning back.

The old woman was hobbling down the stairs, cane in hand. "Your dog," she croaked at him. "Your dog went on my sidewalk. You have to clean it up."

"Not my dog, lady," Eddie croaked



PHOTO BY ANDY PORTER

back. He couldn't understand why he was still standing there.

"He's your dog this morning," the witch-lady said, leaning over the iron gate to inspect MacDoodle's calling card. Now that she stood close Eddie could see her wrinkly skin and frizzy white hair, the age spots on hands and face and neck. A typical old geezerette—nobody to worry about. Her eyes were very bright, though. And around her neck, looking odd against her drab old-lady dress, hung a crystal looped on a leather cord.

"I'm late for work—I've got to go," grunted Eddie, trying to back away. Now MacDoodle was holding him at the spot, sniffing joyously at the old lady's knees. Her eyes grew even brighter.

"Do you see that garage?" she said conversationally, in her papery voice. "I asked them more than once—and politely, mind you—to reposition the security light. It shone directly into my bedroom, you see, and even my heavy curtains didn't keep it out. It interfered with my sleep."

"So?" Eddie didn't care what she was babbling about, but he didn't want her calling the police and getting him ticketed. She must know where he lived. Maybe she was lonely, just wanted to talk for a minute.

"So, young man, I got rid of it." She gestured with the cane. Eddie looked over his shoulder.

The security light, a huge halogen fixture that used to illuminate the main entrance and half the street as well, now lay smashed atop a pile of rubble. Which naturally it would be, he told himself, if a garage had collapsed beneath it.

"Right," he said. "Look, lady, I'm sorry about what the dog did, but I've got to get to work."

The thought of the ten o'clock meeting galvanized him. He grabbed MacDoodle's collar and began to drag him down the street, turning his back on the old lady's angry gaze. So she'd hate him forever—rant at him whenever he walked by just like she did the neighbor kids. He could handle it. All he wanted now was to get away.

But she swung open the gate and hobbled right after him. "You refuse to take responsibility for an animal under your care," she said icily, drawing even with him. Eddie steadfastly ignored her. "I've seen how you treat my cats. I don't think you like animals, and I don't see any reason they should like you. In fact, I think it would be best for all concerned if you were to stay as far apart as possible. Does the word 'doom' mean anything to you?"

"What are you, nuts?" Eddie burst out. "I said I was sorry!" The old bat must be senile. Funny; he'd never had that impression before.

"Doom it is," she said, and to Eddie's amazement tapped him on the shoulder with her cane. "Be very careful around animals from now on. This will last until you learn a sense of responsibility." Then she turned away. MacDoodle gave one last bark and came with Eddie.

HE MADE IT TO THE OFFICE WITH ONLY ten minutes to spare. Drifts of paper seemed to have buried his desk magically overnight; he scrambled frantically



through them looking for his notes and only growled when Joe Martell in the next cubicle offered to bring him coffee before the meeting.

"Don't take it out on me," said Martell, offended. "You could have stayed late last night."

"Leave me alone, why don't you!" Eddie said furiously. Why couldn't people tell when to leave a guy in peace! He stuffed a last handful of papers into a folder and left, stomach churning.

The rest of the day went just as badly. His supervisor dumped so much work on his desk that lunch consisted of a dash to the deli for a sandwich. It was very warm outside, and muggy enough to set him sweating even on that short trip.

An odd thing happened on his way back. An overdressed matron with a Lord & Taylor shopping bag on one arm and a Pekingese in the other screamed piercingly as Eddie passed her. He turned, only slightly curious, then almost burst out laughing. The dog had sunk its teeth into its owner's right breast.

People edged cautiously around her as she twisted, beating ineffectually

at the Peke. Any offbeat occurrence draws a crowd in Manhattan, but this time nobody seemed to know what to do. At last an overweight man who looked like a tourist seized the dog's snout with both hands and forced it open. The Peke snarled and squirmed. Its owner backed away frantically, clutching her shopping bag in front of her for protection. Eddie craned his neck, but didn't see much blood.

"Sheffy!" she wailed, more in anger than in tears, then: "Don't bring him near me!" The stranger began to look sorry he'd interfered. The dog continued to struggle, snapping in the direction of its mistress. An appreciative crowd looked on.

Incredible! What a great story. Eddie thought he'd go back and tell Joe Martell about it, and apologize for that morning. He turned away and almost tripped over a shapeless person selling cheap sunglasses from a TV tray. The vendor lifted her own dark glasses and regarded Eddie unsmilingly. It was the witch-lady.

IT WAS SIX-THIRTY BEFORE HE COULD KNOCK off. Everyone else had left long ago. Eddie was stiff from sitting, and his eyes wouldn't seem to focus on anything more distant than his desk top.

The evening had cooled deliciously. Maybe he would walk a little before hopping the subway...but no, MacDoodle was sitting at home with his legs crossed, just waiting to piss on Eddie's carpet. Thank God Jeff was back from Texas! He'd called to say he'd pick up MacDoodle at nine.

Eddie walked the setter away from the grassy lot and even curbed him. The morning scene kept recurring in his mind's eye, and the way that weird woman had shown up at lunchtime. It wasn't as if she were following him; he'd seen her on the subway before and once even in Central Park. But it was strange, how she'd been lurking just down the street from his own building. He'd had no idea she was a street vendor.

Eddie planned to avoid her end of the block as much as possible for a week or so. It would be inconvenient; the bodega was right on that corner and the dry cleaner just a little farther. But he'd rather circle the block than cross that woman's path again just now.

He'd picked up some fried chicken for when Jeff arrived. Now he made an ineffectual attempt to straighten the living room. He'd never been what you could call neat; Jeff should be used to it. At least he'd moved the dirty dishes into the kitchen.

Animals

He was watching TV when the buzzer rang. MacDoodle seemed to sense something out of the ordinary and started jumping at the door. For once, Eddie didn't yell at him to cut it out. "Yeah, your daddy's back, you dumb dog," he said cheerfully from the couch. "And I'm just as glad to see him as you are, because it means you're out of my life."

"It's open," he yelled as footsteps reached the door. Jeff shouldered it wide in a stupid parody of a bow-legged cowboy, a big grin on his face and a beautiful silver-trimmed Stetson on his head.

At that moment, MacDoodle attacked. Silly, floppy MacDoodle, who had never had the intelligence to dislike anyone, sprang right at his master's throat, fangs bared.

Eddie was paralyzed. Jeff went down in the entryway, instinctively flinging his arms across his face. The front door banged open as dog and man writhed in the confined space.

"Get him off me!" Jeff screamed. He was struggling to crawl backwards into the bedroom but the dog, with unbelievable strength, held him in the doorway. Eddie, openmouthed, couldn't believe what he was seeing. The dog was vicious—and he'd been living happily with Eddie for a week!

He looked around frantically for a weapon. His softball bat! He knocked over the end table getting to it, then paused. If he missed, the dog would go for him—but Jeff was his best friend. . . .

He corncuted. MacDoodle gave a horrible half-shriek/half-howl and fled through the open door. Eddie slammed it behind him.

He grabbed Jeff's arm, babbling. "He's gone! Get up! My God, he must have rabies!" Jeff struggled to his feet hissing against the pain and clutching his left wrist. MacDoodle had drawn blood.

"My God—we've got to get you to the hospital. You've got to get those shots or whatever—" Eddie turned for the phone to call the car service and the ASPCA. In the living-room doorway he tripped over something. It was a shredded Stetson hat.

TWO DAYS LATER JEFF WAS STILL ANGRY at him, even though he reported that MacDoodle seemed perfectly normal now. The ASPCA had found him still on the block, near the vacant lot, and were holding him for observation.

Eddie was just as glad that he and Jeff weren't getting together for a while. He didn't have that many friends, after all; all he needed was to be invited over and have the stupid dog attack again as soon as he stepped in the door.

He shook his head. How could he be taking this seriously? Two dogs go temporarily crazy and you think the big juju is on your neck. Coincidence. There were ways to check things like this.

At work that day he looked up "Pet Stores and Supplies" in the Yellow Pages and found a shop five blocks away that specialized in tropical fish. He'd always considered aquarium fish strictly a hobby for pencil-necked

The lungfish jumped. The tank lid smashed. Behind it came the fish and about twenty gallons of water, all flying toward the store attendant.

geeks, but the store guys didn't need to know that. He'd just walk in and look around.

It was another hot day. The pet store looked cool and dark through the front windows, which were decorated in an undersea motif. *Original*, he thought cynically. A little bell rang over the door as he stepped inside.

Far in the back two clerks were busy waiting on customers. All to the good, Eddie thought; better to try this little experiment alone. His eyes adjusted to the dimness. Bags of colored gravel were piled underneath empty display tanks; glass counters displayed filters, nets, and other paraphernalia.

A single enormous aquarium dominated the front of the store. Eddie approached it curiously. AFRICAN LUNG-FISH, read a hand-lettered sign. 15 YRS. OLD.

As he peered in, a long gray-brown shape nosed out of a heap of gravel covering the bottom of the tank. It was without a doubt the ugliest fish he had ever seen, eel-like and seemingly endless. When the last inch of tail emerged, the thing looked at least four feet long.

Eddie watched it, mesmerized. Had it noticed him? Was this the way it al-

ways acted, or was it disturbed? Did all lungfish swim with their mouths open? The tail seemed to flick rather angrily, he thought. Good thing there was a heavy lid on that tank. He took a hesitant step closer.

Still no outlandish response from the fish. Eddie began to breathe normally. Of course he was overreacting. Didn't they call late summer the silly season? He must be a typical victim.

"That's Otis, our pride and joy," said a voice. "Isn't he something?" A balding guy in a white jacket was coming down the aisle. Eddie was about to say something polite—when the lungfish jumped.

Surged was more like it. The tank lid with its lighting apparatus smashed onto a nearby counter. Behind it came the fish and about twenty gallons of water, all flying toward the store attendant.

FISH EATS MAN IN MIDTOWN, Eddie thought remotely of tomorrow's headline, while the victim flailed and screamed. If he didn't get out of the shop he'd be held as a witness, questioned by police and quoted in the *Post*. Photographs. . . no way. He backed out of the store and slammed the door behind him as the man's partner came running.

Outside, he almost ran from the block. His mind played and replayed the scene. No one had come in behind him, and the people in the back hadn't looked around until the screaming started. Nobody could connect him with this.

He slowed, trying to think.

Apparently the "curse" worked only when a victim was in range. Eddie was acting as some sort of catalyst, setting animals against their nearest and dearest. He'd have to watch his step carefully from now on, especially around people's pets. Man's worst friend, the killer dog. He was a walking B movie. . . .

Wait a minute. Why was he letting this thing get to him? He was a twentieth-century man, not some superstitious primitive in a mud hut. Witches had gone out with the Dark Ages, and curses were something you yelled at cabdrivers.

However, there seemed to be something unusual going on here, and maybe a smart guy could turn it to his advantage. Become a vicious-animal trainer for the movies. Put out the word he knew a hit man who specialized in pet owners. . . . he'd think of something. He hadn't asked for this. No weirdo woman was going to strong-arm him. Change his life, just to save some

other schmuck from the unfortunate consequences? Hah!

In fact, this might turn out to be a lot of fun.

EDDIE'S "POWER" LAY QUIESCENT FOR A few days. He did nothing much but shuttle between work and home, but his thoughts were whirling. He even sauntered past the witch-woman's house on Friday to show off his newfound nonchalance. She was there, all right, sweeping the steps; but she only gave Eddie a glance and turned her back.

At lunchtime he went deliberately to the little park near his office to see what action he could stir up. The results were gratifying.

On the second bench from the corner sat a little old lady and a little old man feeding the pigeons. Eddie had seen them before; even in the sunniest weather they huddled there in long winter coats. Today one had crumbs in a paper bag, the other popcorn. They were smiling. Dozens of birds, gray, blue, and glistening purple, strutted around their feet.

The pigeons grew visibly agitated as Eddie approached. At ten feet they began fighting over the crumbs on the sidewalk, though there were plenty for all. Eddie played with the situation, edging forward a few feet to see the reaction, then sidling back to let the birds calm down. Finally he drew even with the bench.

Shrieking shrilly, the pigeons rose in a body and descended.

Even Eddie was startled. The old woman screamed thinly, unbelievably. A bus driver on break came running from a few benches away. The pigeons whirled away over his head, then dove again. By now the old couple had dropped to the ground and pulled their coats up over their heads, effectively insulating themselves from pecks and scratches. The pigeons seemed more interested in the bread than in human flesh, but still the scene might have come from the Manhattan version of *The Birds*. More passersby pulled the old people to safety.

Eddie did an about-face and walked briskly back to his office, trying to keep a straight face. This was great stuff! Too bad none of his dopey friends would appreciate the fun, not even Jeff. He'd have to attend the Big Event tomorrow by himself.

EDDIE HAD BEEN TO THE NEW YORK Coliseum many times—for the boat show, a couple of trade exhibitions, the 1988 car unveilings. He salivated to think what havoc he could wreak at the

circus, but that wasn't due for months yet. He would have to content himself with today's attraction: the New York Cat Fanciers' annual competition, prizes to be given in two dozen categories.

He walked west from the subway along the southern edge of Central Park, grinning. It was a gorgeous day. Gaggles of tourists sauntered leisurely through the park. Two little girls trailed their mother in Eddie's direction, all wearing tee shirts with cats on them. *Wait till you see how the cute kitties act today*, he thought gleefully.

He crossed Central Park South to avoid a mounted policeman who was chatting with some horse-cab drivers. Someday it might be fun to experiment with the law, but he was busy just now. Besides, he hated horses. When he was about ten his parents had taken him to a riding stable one afternoon with his cousins and left him there. The others were all better riders than Eddie and got a good laugh out of his inexperience; even the stable owner grinned once while picking Eddie off the ground. The memory still burned.

He reached Columbus Circle. The Coliseum stood across six lanes of swirling traffic. As he stood waiting for the light, a voice spoke in Eddie's ear.

"You wouldn't be thinking of going to the cat show, would you?"

He whirled. It was the witch-woman. Though other pedestrians stood all around, the world narrowed to two. She stood right at his elbow, tapping her cane.

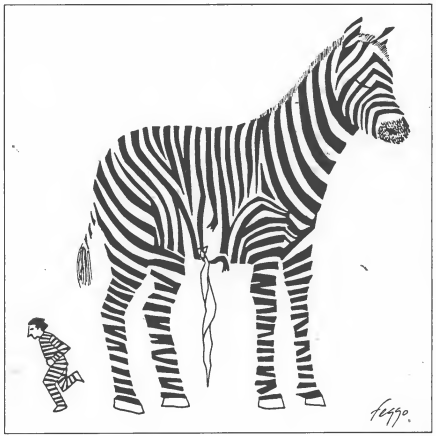
Eddie rallied. This woman had no control over him. "Damn right," he said rudely. "Any law against it?"

"No law," she agreed, eyes narrowing. "But you know as well as I do what will happen if you go through those doors. I appear to have made a mistake with you."

"You sure did, lady," Eddie said proudly. He had gotten the better of this crazy old woman—and she was admitting it. Now she'd leave him alone.

She was fidgeting with her cane, looking disturbed. "And keep away from me with that stick, or I'll call a cop," Eddie said loudly. "Maybe you won't be so quick to wave it around next time." The light changed. Around them the crowd surged forward. "So long, creepo," Eddie tossed over his shoulder, and stepped off the curb.

"Watch out!" somebody yelled. The old woman gasped and grabbed for his arm. He jumped backward, away from her. A horse shrieked. Eddie just had time to see a hansom cab bearing down on him, the panicked driver trying to control it, and then the sudden huge hooves of a rearing horse. ■



MEMOIRS OF A BOTTLE DJINN

It is common knowledge
that bottles washed
ashore frequently
contain spirits. But
some are far more
potent than others. . . .

JANE YOLEN

ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD HAMANN

THE SEA WAS AS DARK AS OLD BLOOD, not the wine color poets sing of. In the early evening it seemed to stain the sand. As usual this time of year the air was heavy, ill-omened.

I walked out onto the beach below my master's house whenever I could slip away unnoticed, though it was a dangerous practice. Still, it was one necessary to my well-being. I had been a sailor for many more years than I had been a slave, and the smell of the salt air was not a luxury for me but a necessity.

If a seabird had washed up dead at my feet, its belly would have contained black worms and other evil auguries, so dark and lowering was the sky. So I wondered little at the bottle that the sea had deposited before me, certain it contained noxious fumes at best, the legacy of its long cradling in such a salty womb.

In my country poets sing the praises of wine and gift its color to the water along the shores of Hellas, and I can think of no finer hymn. But in this land they believe their prophet forbade them strong drink. They are a sober race who reward themselves in heaven even as they deny themselves on earth. It is a system of which I do not approve, but then I am a Greek by birth and a heathen by inclination despite my master's long importuning. It is only by chance that I have not yet lost an eye, an ear,

or a hand to my master's unforgiving code. He finds me amusing, but it has been seven years since I have had a drink.

I stared at the bottle. If I had any luck at all, the bottle had fallen from a foreign ship and its contents would still be potable. But then, if I had any luck at all, I would not be a slave in Araby, a Greek sailor washed up on these shores the same as the bottle at my feet. My father, who was a cynic like his father before him, left me with a cynic's name—Antithias—a wry heart, and an acid tongue, none proper legacies for a slave. But as blind Homer wrote, "Few sons are like their father; many are worse." I guessed that the wine, if drinkable, would come from an inferior year. And with that thought, I bent to pick it up.

The glass was a cloudy green, like the sea after a violent storm. Like the storm that had wrecked my ship and cast me onto a slaver's shore. There were darker flecks along the bottom, a sediment that surely foretold an undrinkable wine. I let the bottle warm between my palms.

Since the glass was too dark to let me see more, I waited past my first desire and was well into my second, letting it rise up in me like the heat of passion. The body has its own memories,

"Memoirs of a Bottle Djinn" appears in *Arabeques: More Tales of the Arabian Nights*, edited by Susan Schwartz, to be published by Avon Books in August, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by the author.



Bud Hornum '88

BOTTLE DJINN

though I must be frank: passion, like wine, was simply a fragrance remembered. Slaves are not lent the services of hours nor was one my age and race useful for breeding. It had only been by feigning impotence that I had kept that part of my anatomy intact—another of my master's unforgiving laws. Even in the dark of night, alone on my pallet, I forwent the pleasures of the hand for there were spies everywhere in his house and the eunuchs were a notably gossipy lot. Little but a slave's tongue lauding morality stood between gossip and scandal, stood between me and the knife. Besides, the women of Araby tempted me little. They were like the bottle in my hand—beautiful and empty. A wind blowing across the mouth of each could make them sing but the tunes were worth little. I liked my women like my wine—full-bodied and tangled with history, bringing a man into poetry. So I had put my passion into work these past seven years, slave's work though it was. Blind Homer had it right, as usual: "Labor conquers all things." Even old lusts for women and wine.

Philosophy did not conquer movement, however, and my hand found the cork of the bottle before I could stay it. With one swift movement I had plucked the stopper out. A thin strand of smoke rose into the air. A very bad year in-

deed, I thought, as the cork crumbled in my hand.

Up and up and up the smoky rope ascended and I, bottle in hand, could not move, such was my disappointment. Even my father's cynicism and his father's before him had not prepared me for such a sudden loss of all hope. My mind, a moment before full of anticipation and philosophy, was now in blackest despair. I found myself without will, reliving in my mind the moment of my capture and the first bleak days of my enslavement.

That is why it was several minutes before I realized that the smoke had begun to assume a recognizable shape above the bottle's gaping mouth: long, sensuous legs glimpsed through diaphanous trousers; a waist my hands could easily span; breasts beneath a short embroidered cotton vest as round as ripe pomegranates; and a face... the face was smoke and air. I remembered suddenly a girl in the port of Alexandria who sold fruit from a basket and gave me a smile. She was the last girl who had smiled upon me when I was a free man and I, not knowing the future, had ignored her, so intent was I on my work. My eyes clouded over at the memory, and when they were clear again, I saw that same smile imprinted upon the face of the djinn.

"I am what you would have me be, master," her low voice called down to me.

I reached up a hand to help her step to earth, but my hand went

through hers, mortal flesh through smoky air. It was then, I think, that I really believed she was what I guessed her to be.

She smiled. "What is your wish, master?"

I took the time to smile back. "How many wishes do I get?"

She shook her head but still she smiled, that Alexandrian smile, all lips without a hint of teeth. But there was a dimple in her left cheek. "One, my master, for you drew the cork but once."

"And if I draw it again?"

"The cork is gone." This time her teeth showed as did a second dimple, on the right.

I sighed and looked at the crumbled mess in my hand, then sprinkled the cork like seed upon the sand. "Just one."

"Does a slave need more?" she asked in that same low voice.

"You mean that I should ask for my freedom?" I laughed and sat down on the sand. The little waves that outrun the big ones tickled my feet, for I had come out barefoot. I looked across the water. "Free to be a sailor again at my age? Free to let the sun peel the skin from my back, free to leave my guts over the stern in a blinding rain, free to wreck once more upon a slave's shore?"

She drifted down beside me and, though her smoky hand could not hold mine, I felt a breeze across my palm that could have been her touch. I could see through her to the cockles and white stones poking the sand.

"Free to make love to Alexandrian women," she said. "Free to drink strong wine."

"Free to have regrets in the morning either way," I replied. Then I laughed.

She laughed back. "What about the freedom to indulge in a dinner of roast partridge in lemons and eggplant. What about hard-boiled eggs sprinkled with vermillion. What about cinnamon tripe?" It was the meal my master had just had.

"Rich food like rich women gives me heartburn," I said.

"The freedom to fill your pockets with coins?"

Looking away from her, over the clotted sea, I whispered to myself, "Accursed thirst for gold! What dost thou not compel mortals to do," a line from the *Aeneid*.

"Virgil was a wise man," she said quietly. "For a Roman!" Then she laughed.

I turned to look at her closely for the first time. A woman who knows Virgil, be she djinn or mortal, was a woman to behold. Though her body

PROFILE:

JANE YOLEN

Jane Yolen is the third of our editor/writers in this issue. Since she last appeared in *Twilight Zone* ("Wolf/Child," June 1987), she's been very busy indeed. *Owl Moon*, a children's book written in collaboration with illustrator John Schoenherr, won last year's Caldecott Award, and Yolen also received the Kerlan Award from the Children's Literature Research Center at the University of Michigan. A new adult fantasy, *Sister Light, Sister Dark*, will be published in hardcover this fall by Tor Books, with a sequel, *White Jenna*, to follow next year. And, if that weren't enough for one lifetime, Harcourt, Brace has just announced that a new children's book imprint, "Jane Yolen Books," will debut in fall, 1990.

Yolen's story in this issue, "Memoirs of a Bottle Djinn," ap-



pears in *Arabesques*, a new anthology of Arabian Nights-style fantasy tales to be published in paperback in August by Avon Books. Edited by Susan Schwartz (another editor/writer!), the collection features new fiction by such spellbinders as Gene Wolfe, Larry Niven, Tanith Lee, and André Norton, to name only a few.

was still composed of that shifting, smoky air, the features on her face now held steady. She no longer looked like the Alexandrian girl, but had a far more sophisticated beauty. Lined with kohl, her eyes were gray as smoke and her hair the same color. There were shadows along her cheeks that emphasized the bone and faint smile lines crinkling the skin at each corner of her generous mouth. She was not as young as she had first appeared, but then I am not so young myself.

"Ah, Anthias," she said, smiling at me, "even djinns age, though corked up in a bottle slows down the process immeasurably."

I spoke Homer's words to her then: "In youth and beauty, wisdom is but rare." I added in my own cynic's way, "If ever."

"You think me wise, then?" she asked, then laughed and her laughter was like the tinkling of camel bells. "But a gaudy parrot is surely as wise, reciting another's words as his own."

"I know no parrots who hold Virgil and Homer in their mouths," I said, gazing at her not with longing but with a kind of wonder. "No djinn either."

"You know many?"

"Parrots, yes; djinn, no. You are my first."

"Then you are lucky, indeed, Greek, that you called up one of the worshippers of Allah and not one of the followers of Iblis."

I nodded. "Lucky, indeed."

"So, to your wish, master," she said.

"You call me master, I who am a slave," I said. "Do you not want the freedom you keep offering me? Freedom from the confining green bottle, freedom from granting wishes to any master who draws the cork?"

She brushed her silvery hair back from her forehead with a delicate hand. "You do not understand the nature of the djinn," she said. "You do not understand the nature of the bottle."

"I understand rank," I said. "On the sea I was between the captain and the rowers. In that house, and I gestured with my head to the palace behind me, I am below my master and above the kitchen staff. Where are you?"

Her brow furrowed as she thought. "If I work my wonders for centuries, I might at last attain a higher position within the djinn," she said.

It was my turn to smile. "Rank is a game," I said. "It may be conferred by birth, by accident, or by design. But rank does not honor the man. The man honors the rank."

"You are a philosopher," she said, her eyes lightening.

"I am a Greek," I answered. "It is the same thing."

She laughed again, holding her palm over her mouth coquettishly. I could no longer see straight through her though an occasional piece of driftwood appeared like a delicate tattoo on her skin.

"Perhaps we both need a wish," I said, shifting my weight. One of my feet touched hers and I could feel a slight jolt, as if lightning had run between us. Such things happen occasionally on the open sea.

"Alas, I cannot wish, myself," she said in a whisper. "I can only grant wishes."

I looked at her lovely face washed



with its sudden sadness and whispered back, "Then I give my wish to you."

She looked directly into my eyes and I could see her eyes turn golden in the dusty light. I could at the same time somehow see beyond them, not into the sand or water, but to a different place, a place of whirlwinds and smokeless fire.

"Then, Anthias, you will have wasted a wish," she said. Shifting her gaze slightly, she looked behind me, her eyes opening wide in warning. As she spoke, her body seemed to melt into the air and suddenly there was a great white bird before me, beating its feathered pinions against my body before taking off towards the sky.

"Where are you going?" I cried.

"To the Valley of Abqar," the bird called. "To the home of my people. I will wait there for your wish, Greek. But hurry. I see both your past and your future closing in behind you."

I turned and, pouring down the stone steps of my master's house, were a half-dozen guards and one shrilling eunuch pointing his flabby hand in my direction. They came towards me screaming, though what they were saying I was never to know for their scimitars

were raised and my Arabic deserts me in moments of sheer terror.

I think I screamed; I am not sure. But I spun around again towards the sea and saw the bird winging away into a halo of light.

"Take me with you," I cried. "I desire no freedom but by your side."

The bird shuddered as it flew, then banked sharply, and headed back towards me, calling, "Is that your wish, master?"

A scimitar descended.

"That is my wish," I cried, as the blade bit into my throat.

WE HAVE LIVED NOW FOR CENTURIES within the green bottle and Zarifa was right, I had not understood its nature. Inside is an entire world, infinite and ever-changing. The smell of the salt air blows through that world and we dwell in a house that sometimes overlooks the ocean and sometimes overlooks the desert sands.

Zarifa, my love, is as mutable, neither young nor old, neither soft nor hard. She knows the songs of blind Homer and the poet Virgil as well as the poems of the warlords of Ayyām Al-Arab. She can sing in languages that are long dead.

And she loves me beyond my wishing, or so she says, and I must believe it for she would not lie to me. She loves me though I have no great beauty, my body bearing a sailor's scars and a slave's scar and this curious blood necklace where the scimitar left its mark. She loves me, she says, for my cynic's wit and my noble heart, that I would have given my wish to her.

So we live together in our ever-changing world. I read now in six tongues beside Greek and Arabic, and have learned to paint and sew. My paintings are in the Persian style, but I embroider like a Norman queen. We learn from the centuries, you see, and we taste the world anew each time the cork is drawn.

So there, my master, I have fulfilled your curious wish, speaking my story to you alone. It seems a queer waste of your one piece of luck, but then most men waste their wishes. And if you are a poet and a storyteller, as you say, of the lineage of blind Homer and the rest, but one who has been blocked from telling more tales, then perhaps my history can speed you on your way again. I shall pick up one of your old books, my master, now that we have a day and a night in this new world. Do you have a favorite I should try—or should I just go to a bookseller and trust my luck? In the last few centuries it has been remarkably good, you see. ■

DAVID LYNCH

AMERICAN PRIMITIVE

THE DIRECTOR OF *DUNE*, *ERASERHEAD*, AND
BLUE VELVET DISCUSSES THE ORIGINS OF
HIS DARK CINEMATIC VISION.

BY

JAMES VERNIERE



DAVID LYNCH MUST HAVE BEEN A VERY strange child. This might sound like a presumptuous, if not downright rude, observation, but only to those who have not seen Lynch's cult classic, *Eraserhead*. Although the 1978 film has not inspired imitations (how could it?), it is without doubt the most original, disturbing, and surreal meditation on modern life since Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí put their heads together in 1928 and created *Un Chien Andalou*. Where on earth did Lynch come from, we wondered. It was as if John Waters and Franz Kafka had given birth to a manic-depressive with a dementedly

divine sense of humor.

Since *Eraserhead*, the career of this forty-one-year-old filmmaker from the Northwest (whose father was a research scientist specializing in tree diseases) has had its ups and downs. Although he was nominated for best director for his work on *The Elephant Man* (the 1980 production financed by Brookfilms), he subsequently signed up with huckster-meritus Dino DeLaurentiis, to helm DeLaurentiis's fifty-million-dollar film adaptation of Frank Herbert's classic sf novel, *Dune*. ("When Dino called me," recalls Lynch, "I thought he was talking about a film called *June*.")

Dune, of course, was a flop of titanic proportions, but there was a method to Lynch's madness. Before accepting the *Dune* job, Lynch made DeLaurentiis promise that in return for his work on the science fiction epic, DeLaurentiis would finance Lynch's low-budget follow-up film. That turned out to be none other than *Blue Velvet*, a surreal, erotic thriller that split the critics vehemently, but garnered more attention, and inspired more young filmmakers, than any other film of the last decade.

The question for David Lynch is: Is there life after *Blue Velvet*? On the interview circuit to promote *Blue Velvet* in late '86, Lynch talked expansively about *Ronnie Rocket*, the film "about electricity" that was supposed to be his next project. But *Ronnie Rocket* was later shelved. Lynch then announced plans to make a *Blue Velvet*-like thriller called *Down at the Lake*. That also hit the skids. Then it was announced that Steve Martin was teaming with Lynch to make something called—believe it or not—*One Saliva Bubble*. But that one also burst.

The director of *Blue Velvet*, the darling of the avant-garde culture vultures, hasn't made a film in almost three years. What gives?

What gives is DEG. Like David Cronenberg, whose current film *Twins* languished at DEG for two years despite the fact that Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) was a critical and popular success, Lynch's career stalled because the company that Dino built is collapsing like the proverbial house of cards. Until that situation is resolved, Lynch's directorial ambitions remain in a holding pattern.

But David Lynch isn't one to let such problems stand in the way of his creativity. He was a successful painter and illustrator before he began his film career, and he's produced enough new work in the past year to mount a major show at a Los Angeles art gallery. He's also currently developing an album of music with composer Angelo Badalamenti, with whom he collaborated on the score of *Blue Velvet*. Most recently, he made his feature film debut as an actor in Tina Rathborne's new film *Zelly and Me*, starring opposite *Blue Velvet*'s Isabella Rossellini, his current companion and mother of his third child.

While waiting for the clouds to clear, Lynch took time out to talk about the origins of his own particular artistic vision, a vision rooted in the dark underside of the American heartland.

TZ: Let's start at the beginning. Do you remember any specific books or movies that made an impact on you while you were growing up?



PHOTO © 1988 DEG

TZ INTERVIEW



PHOTO © 1977 LIBRA FILMS

ERASERHEAD, 1978

"Film can do something that words alone can't do. So if you can express something perfectly in words, then why bother making a film at all?"

LYNCH: No, I didn't read anything. I was never in the house. I mean, I was in the house at night. But I was not a reader. I was just out and around with my friends, and we got into a lot of trouble.

TZ: For instance?

LYNCH: Well...

TZ: You weren't one of those kids who got arrested for dismembering the neighbor's cat, were you?

LYNCH: Well, I didn't get arrested for it, no. [He seems to be weighing just how much he can reveal.] I don't know which story to tell. I cooked a beetle on a candle once and ate it. It was very sweet. [He smiles ghoulishly.] A lot of sugar in a beetle....

TZ: Was your family religious?

LYNCH: My father and mother were. They're Presbyterians, which is a perfect sort of Northwestern religion.

TZ: How do Presbyterians explain sin and retribution?

LYNCH: They don't...or, I have no idea, really.

TZ: When did you first realize you wanted to work in the arts?

LYNCH: When I was about twenty, I realized that I didn't

think the way that other people seemed to think. I'd say that's when I had my first original thought.

TZ: Do you remember what it was?

LYNCH: Oh, no. [He's keeping another secret.] I don't want to get arrested. But I was going to be a painter at the time. And when you're a painter, you think the ideas come from the same place as a writer's ideas. But they don't bob up so high. They come up, run down your arm, and onto the canvas. It's the same sort of process, but you don't have to articulate the ideas. It's still hard for me to describe the process. It's all feelings and intuitions, which I feel even now working on a film. Of course, I have to write a script to get the money to make a movie. But a script is only a blueprint. And some ideas never even make it past that stage of filmmaking, the scriptwriting stage.

TZ: With your artist's background, are you more comfortable with storyboards than with scripts?

LYNCH: No, I think I would prefer to have the ideas somehow go from my mind right to the film. That would be great. The more filters an idea goes through before it hits the screen, the more danger there is of losing the idea altogether. The whole point is that film can do something that words alone can't do, so if you can express something perfectly in words, then why bother making a film at all? You know some people say that sound killed movies because filmmakers rely on words now to do what they had to do with pictures before.

TZ: What are some of the films and filmmakers that have had the greatest effect on you?

LYNCH: *Sunset Boulevard*, 8½, Jacques Tati, Stanley Kubrick, Hitchcock, films that make a feeling of place, an atmosphere, a mood, with characters we can fall in love with.

TZ: Given what you've said, it must have been difficult working on *The Elephant Man*, which you didn't write.

LYNCH: Not really. It's like if you grow your own food, you feel pretty good about cooking it up and eating it. If you buy your food at the store, it's really the same process. An idea is an idea, and your job is to tune into it. That's what we did on *The Elephant Man*.

TZ: The films you've named as influences seem less surreal than your own work.

LYNCH: But I don't think they are. I think they're all extremely stylistic filmmakers. I think all those films create worlds very different from this one.

TZ: Were you surprised by the favorable reaction to *Eraserhead*?

LYNCH: People didn't react favorably at first. But times have changed, and more people have gotten into *Eraserhead*. Some of them because it's achieved a certain status. But some really tuned into it.

TZ: One of the recurring images in your films is something I can only describe as an industrial nightmare. In *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dune*, and especially *Blue Velvet*. What does it mean?

LYNCH: It's Philadelphia. [He smiles.] To tell you the truth, I actually love factories. They have a power. I use them in a menacing way in my films because they're the opposite of natural images. But if you look closely at natural images, they can be menacing, too.

TZ: There is, of course, a school of thought which says we've all been corrupted by urban society. Is that idea behind your use of industrial imagery?

LYNCH: No, it came to me in a natural, subliminal way.

TZ: Are you satisfied with the way *Dune* turned out?

LYNCH: There's some good stuff in *Dune*. It's too bad it all got jammed together.

DAVID LYNCH

TZ: *Dune* is already released on videotape. But I've heard that you're planning to release a re-edited, four-and-a-half-hour version.

LYNCH: That's right. It's in the works, but whether or not it'll happen has yet to be seen. As Raffaella DeLaurentiis [former head of DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group and the producer of *Dune*] and I used to say, *Dune* was our baby, but it didn't turn out so good. So now we're going to give it an operation. It's like *Erase-head* in that respect.

TZ: Looking back on it, what kind of reaction did you have to the drubbing *Dune* took from the critics?

LYNCH: It was a nightmare, but the film's reputation has gotten better and better since then, so there's a lot of interest in a larger version. But you really "die the death" at the time, I'll tell you. The ideas just stop flowing in your head for a while. I felt, not like giving it all up, but I started to think in strange ways. I stopped relying on my intuition and feelings for a while. It kills something.

TZ: How did you get back on track?

LYNCH: Time went by, and the feeling just sort of lifted. Like a lot of things that are painful, you just don't remember the pain for long. So when I got to make *Blue Velvet* it was under ideal circumstances. The pressure of trying to make a film that was supposed to make a hundred million dollars was off.

TZ: How did you stand that pressure at the time?

LYNCH: I don't know. It was seven days a week of shooting for a year, just shooting, and then it was six days a week of post-production for more than a year. And then when the film fails. . . . Well, you can easily lose your mind.

TZ: Do you hold a grudge against film critics?

LYNCH: I think that, all in all, when the critics get hostile, you have to wonder what they're up to. There's a way to do reviews, and there's a way to hurt somebody. And there's no way for me to do anything about it. You can write a letter to the editor, but big deal.

TZ: In all of your films you seem fascinated by evil. The heart of darkness in *Blue Velvet*, for example, was Dennis Hopper's character, Frank Boothe. What did he represent to you?

LYNCH: Frank to me was a cool, American heavy. He's twisted and violent. But he's also so American that he might have just stepped out of Bakersfield, California, sort of out of the desert. In fact, Dennis Hopper was originally from Kansas, which gets me, because there's also a character named Dorothy in the film, and that's a name that recalls Kansas, too.

TZ: The film was set in the eighties, but it had a fifties sensibility. What's so important about that decade to you?

LYNCH: Because in the fifties there was an innocence and idealism that marked it as a naive time. At the same time, all the evil in *Blue Velvet* also existed in the fifties. It was just beneath the surface then. It's bobbing up more now. We're more aware of things now, which I think is good.

TZ: I suppose it's television that's made us more aware of the evil in the world.

LYNCH: In a way it has. I don't know that much about everyday news. But a bomb went off in Paris a few months ago and a couple of people were killed. The same day in a bar someplace in America, a guy took a shotgun and shot four people. But the story was buried in the papers. The point is that the news covers up as much as it reveals. I think one of the sickest things on television is the way people are killed. It's so clean and so fast that kids think it's as easy as that. Real death is, of course, much messier.

TZ: The opening sequence of *Blue Velvet* is an evocation of utopian, middle-class America. You even named your family



THE ELEPHANT MAN, 1980

PHOTO © 1980 BROOKSFILMS

**"When we meet somebody,
it's like meeting a sack with a
face on it. . . . Only later does
that sack wither away,
and you start meeting the
real person."**

the Beaumonts, which to me recalled Hugh Beaumont, the actor who played Mr. Cleaver on *Leave It to Beaver*. But although you point out the surface tranquility, your camera closes in on the evil that lurks just beneath the surface.

LYNCH: You know I never thought of the *Leave It to Beaver* connection. I'll be doggone! Now that you mention it that might be where I got that name. I have a theory that sometimes we look at people and we think, "He looks like a Bill." In my mind I just saw "Beaumont's Hardware Store," and it felt just right.

TZ: Tell us about the character of Jeffrey Beaumont in the film. He was played by Kyle MacLachlan of *Dune*, and many have noted that the actor looks very much like you. Is he a sort of alter ego?

LYNCH: Part of that's true. I personally love secret things and mysteries, and Jeffrey is like that, too. He wants to see all the hidden things. There are several levels of things going on in the film. One is watching television. Jeffrey's mom and Aunt Barbara watch crime shows on TV. But that's a safe fascination that we can work out in our living rooms. Then there's Sandy, who can hear her father, who's a policeman,

TZ INTERVIEW

talk about his cases because her room is right over his office. She gets to hear the real facts through her floor. So she's closer to the reality. Then there's Jeffrey who wants to get even closer, but still remained removed. So he takes a risk and tries to watch this mysterious woman from inside her apartment.

TZ: Were you a voyeur as a boy growing up in the Northwest?

LYNCH: The point is that I think *everyone* is fascinated by these things. That's half the lure of any movie. When *People* magazine says *Blue Velvet* is unlike anything you've ever seen before in your life, it's the greatest compliment the film can get. It makes you want to see it. It's like a carnival pitch.

TZ: Aren't you suggesting in your film—like Hitchcock in many of his films—that by witnessing evil you partake of it?

LYNCH: Not by witnessing. There's another level. Jeffrey begins to realize that the things which are hidden are also hidden within him. That he's not that different, and that people get to make choices between good and evil impulses.

TZ: *Blue Velvet* was described by some critics as 'The Hardy Boys Go to Hell.'

LYNCH: That's exactly what it is. It's Norman Rockwell meets Hieronymus Bosch. It's the two extremes in conflict.

TZ: But isn't evil more interesting, more seductive, not only in your films, but in art in general?

LYNCH: I've got a theory that the unknown always has a power over us that we can only feel, not know. When you look into it, you can get seduced by it. But by seeing it for what it is and naming it, you can reduce its power, make it weaker. And you end up a better person for having experienced it.

TZ: Can you remember a time in your childhood when you first recognized that evil existed?

LYNCH: At first, I thought there was nothing but goodness in the world. I know it sounds typical, but that stage lasted a little longer with me, I suppose, because I was in the Northwest, where it was idyllic. But I went to Brooklyn several times to visit my grandparents, and that was when I felt fear and violence in the air for the first time.

TZ: In a previous interview, you talked about discovering Kafka's writings as an adult. Can you elaborate?

LYNCH: Not too long ago, I forget when, I first read "Metamorphosis." I guess it was at the American Film Institute. I liked that and then I read "The Country Doctor." I've got his complete works now.

TZ: Would it be accurate to say you feel a kinship with Kafka?

LYNCH: He thrills me with every sentence. I'm there a hundred percent. I love his thinking.

TZ: It's alienation elevated to a world view. Doesn't it preclude the sharing experience that movies are supposed to be?

LYNCH: I think, first of all, that when we meet somebody it's like meeting a sack with a face on it that does the meeting and talking. Only later on does that sack kind of wither away, and you start meeting the real person. So I think that Kafka was capable of functioning in the world. But when you sit down and start writing and tapping into your ideas, things just start popping out of you that you didn't even know were there.

TZ: Do you follow the work of your contemporaries?

LYNCH: Not really. I think I'm so much better. [Laughs.] Directors are a jealous group, like everyone else. Seriously though, I'm very happy with the way Cronenberg's *The Fly* turned out, especially since he worked so long on a film for Dino [DeLaurentiis] that didn't get made [*Total Recall*].

TZ: Do you go to the movies often?

LYNCH: No, I get nervous at the movies. The truth is I can hardly bear to look at them.



BLUE VELVET, 1986

"The unknown always has a power over us we can only feel, not know. When you look into it, you can be seduced by it. But by seeing it for what it is, you can reduce its power."

▼ DUNE, 1983 ►



PHOTO © 1983 UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS

DAVID LYNCH



ZELLY AND ME, 1988

"The critics' reaction to *Dune* was a nightmare. But the film's reputation has gotten better and better since then, so there's a lot of interest in a larger version."

PHOTO © 1986 DEG



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PHOTO © 1987 COLUMBIA PICTURES

A summer's morning a few years from now. A seasoned hiker traveling a deserted mountain trail. A traveler who will soon discover that civilization is far closer than she imagines. . . .

FLOODGATE

STANLEY SCHMIDT

ILLUSTRATION BY BART GOLDMAN



HE SOUND WAS nothing that belonged in the mountains, and it stopped Jessica in her tracks. After a minute of intent listen-

ing it came again—distant, but not distant enough. It wasn't quite like anything she'd ever heard before, but it reminded her, somehow, of the eerily undulating hisses and squeals she'd heard as her grandfather showed her how to tune an ancient regenerative radio he'd built, back when she was a little girl. The sound continued on for a while; then it ended abruptly in a hollow pop. After a brief pause, it started over.

It seemed to be coming from somewhere near the lean-to.

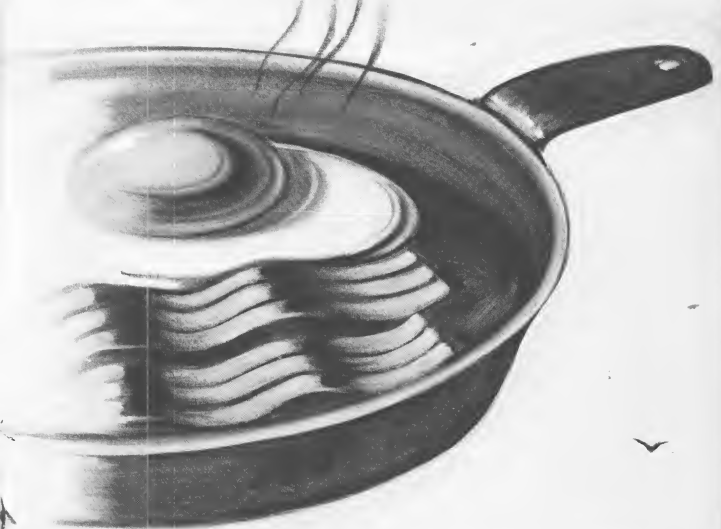
For a moment Jessica leaned against a big oak, letting its trunk take the weight of the heavy pack off her shoulders as she thought. She still heard the mysterious sound, off and on, and she didn't hear anything else. It was as if the birds had also decided the new sound didn't belong here, and were withholding their own sounds until they knew more about the intruder. Part of Jessica wanted to know, and part just wished it would go away. It encroached too harshly on a trip that, until now, had been going almost too well.

She had congratulated herself sever-

al times on the way up on not having met anyone else on the trail. Backpacking had become an explosive fad shortly after she took it up, an incredible thirty-eight years ago. She hadn't liked that—the traffic jams on trails, the need to stand in line and make reservations for campsites—but, like most fads, it had crested and gradually faded. Hardly surprising: carrying a pack that could make one self-sufficient in the wilderness was work. This year the Park Service had finally abolished the reservation system, and for Jessica that was cause for rejoicing. Today, as she gained altitude without seeing another soul, she had dared to hope that she would not only get into her favorite lean-to, but might even have it to herself (give or take a bear or skunk).

That hope had grown powerful, for this place was special. Just a few steps ahead was the spot where she had first decided, after three days of doubts, that backpacking was for her. The fog, she remembered, had climbed a little faster than she had; and when she stepped out of the woods into tall grass bordered by flame azaleas and overlooking a magnificent sweep of two states, the last clouds were just rising off the summit of Thunderhead, straight ahead across Spence Field. They had taken her last doubts with them, and from that moment her life was irrevocably changed for the better.





FLOODGATE

And now...

The woods still smelled the same and the leaves still crackled underfoot. The air still had the same cool, crisp flavor that kept her coming back. But now someone—or something—was here in her special place, with something that didn't belong. The noise was irritating enough in itself, but she had a bad feeling that there was more to it than that.

Suddenly resolute, she pulled away from the oak, once more feeling the full weight of her pack, and hurried onward.

She had to know if some dolt had dragged a radio up here. If he had—well, she'd teach him a thing or two.

MOMENTS LATER SHE EMERGED FROM the woods, but this time she cut hurriedly across the corner of the bald. It was more overgrown than before, but the first peak of Thunderhead still rose majestically at the far end, today with no clouds in sight. Jessica hardly noticed. The unfamiliar sound had crowded everything else out of her mind.

The lean-to was a short distance down a side trail, past tangles of blackberries still in flower, and each time the sound came it was louder. She approached the lean-to from the side, so the first things she saw were its stone wall and

slanting roof. As she came around to the front, open except for the heavy bear screen, her nostrils caught that blend of food smells and wood smoke and stove fuel that always evoked so many memories.

And, even as the scent registered, the whistling sound swirled briefly, culminating in a pop of truly startling loudness as it echoed off the rock of the walls and the corrugated tin of the roof.

The lean-to's lone occupant looked up from where he sat on the edge of a bunk made of wire mesh on a log frame. "Hi," he said with a smile that seemed friendly enough. Then he turned his attention back to the thing on the bunk beside him.

Jessica stared at him and it. He was a gangly, sandy-haired teenager, barely old enough to be out here alone and barely strong enough to carry a pack. He was dressed from head to toe in the silky harlequin garb that had burst into popularity at the turn of the century and had not yet quite vanished. It was flimsy, gaudy city stuff, not at all like the ruggedly functional cargo pants and plaid flannel shirt Jessica wore. The thing he was fiddling with was the size of a very small breadbox and looked vaguely electronic, though not like any radio or player she'd ever seen. The low squeals and moans it emitted sounded even less familiar close at hand than they had from the trail.

The kid's fingers played over flat

sensors, and luminous numbers and bars danced on the panel. After a moment it dawned on Jessica that the touch pads and displays weren't labeled, and around that seed crystallized the conviction that the thing was homemade. She was about to ask what it was when it popped again, so loudly she jumped back involuntarily.

And then there was a Svea stove, just like hers, sitting on top of the gadget. The kid calmly took it off and set it aside, next to the blue down sleeping bag he'd rolled out on the bunk, and started punching pads again.

"Wait a minute," Jessica blurted out. "What is that thing?"

For the first time he turned to face her for more than two seconds. "You like it?" he said with a big dopey grin. "Bet you wish you had one after lugging that thing up here, don't you?"

"I don't know if I like it," she said. "What is it?" She realized then that he'd been talking about her pack, which she was still wearing. She slipped it off and hung it on a rusty nail in the ridgepole. She wondered where his was. She looked all around the lean-to and saw nothing except a cheap little day pack and a few odds and ends on the bunk with the stove.

And, of course, the gadget.

"It's a transpon transceiver," he said proudly. "I made it. My name's Steve, by the way. What's yours?"

"Jessica," she said, a little embarrassed that he was the first to think of introductions. "What's a transpon transceiver?" She sat down on one of the bunks in the lower tier. No sense keeping a load on her feet while they talked.

"The wave of the future," he said. "A transpon transceiver is just what the name says. It sends and receives things using transpons."

"Sure," said Jessica. "You sound just like a dictionary." She gazed absently out the front of the lean-to at the mountain laurel just coming into bloom, its wedding-cake buds and blossoms glowing warm pink in the late sunlight as if each one contained a tiny electric bulb. "Pardon my ignorance, but what's a transpon?"

Steve had quit playing with the transceiver to talk to her. "Well...I'm not a physicist—though I hope to be someday. So I don't know how well I can explain it to you. But a transpon is a recently discovered thing which seems to be one of the basic units of reality. Remember how folks used to think everything was either a particle or a wave but then they discovered that some things acted like one and sometimes the other, so they invented wave-particle duality

PROFILE:



STANLEY SCHMIDT

Stanley Schmidt began selling stories while a graduate student in physics at Case Western Reserve University in 1968, and continued free-lancing while an assistant professor at Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio (teaching physics, astronomy, and science fiction). He has contributed numerous stories and articles to magazines and original anthologies including *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact*, *Isaac*

Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Rigel*, *Habitsats*, *Writer's Digest*, and *The Twilight Zone*.

As editor of *Analog*, he has been nominated eight times for the Hugo award for Best Professional Editor since 1978. In his writing and editing he draws on a varied background including extensive experience as a musician, photographer, traveler, naturalist, outdoorsman, pilot, and student of languages. Most of these influences have left traces in his fourth novel, *Tweedloop*, first published by TOR Books in 1986 and recently released as a mass market paperback. (A version of the first chapter earlier appeared as a short story in *The Twilight Zone*.)

"Floodgate" draws heavily on his backpacking experience and a fantasy most backpackers have probably shared—plus the old saying, "Be careful what you wish for—you might get it."

and started talking about 'wavicles'? Well, a transpon acts sometimes like a wavicle and sometimes like... something else. The important thing is that it can act like a... field, or maybe an exchange particle... that links two points in space-time."

Jessica nodded numbly. She remembered when the universe had been as simple as particles and waves, all right; that's what they'd taught her in grade school. After that, for a while, she'd prided herself on a good layman's knowledge of science. But lately there had been such an explosion of weird new concepts that she no longer kidded herself that she could keep up. Steve's explanation might have been so much smoke—but she'd read enough science fiction to recognize the essence of what he was talking about. "You mean your gadget there is a matter transmitter?"

"Yes. Five years ago nobody had any idea it was possible, but then, a really new discovery can never be deduced from old ideas. Transpons were like that. Took everybody completely by surprise. But it didn't take long for people to start playing with applications." He patted his gizmo proudly. "Don't think anybody else has one of these, though. Transmitter and receiver, all in one. My mom's at home with another one just like it. I signal her I'm ready, like this"—his fingers danced on the panel—"and she puts something on top of her unit, like here. Then I press this, she presses one at her end, and..." The whistles coalesced into a pop, and suddenly there was a package of freeze-dried ham and beans where there had been nothing before.

Steve held it up with a triumphant grin. "There! Mind you, in principle it doesn't have to be freeze-dried. I'm just using up a few supplies I had left over from when I carried a regular-sized pack."

It should have seemed fantastic, Jessica thought, but she'd had so much experience at seeing the fantastic become commonplace that the wonder passed very quickly now. Her mind went straight for the obvious implications. She looked at the pile of stuff on the bunk, and the flimsy little day pack. "So the little pack and the transceiver are all you carry now, no matter how far you walk?"

"Those and the sleeping bag. I only carry the bag because my unit's field doesn't cover a big-enough volume for it. No reason why it can't, though. I'll be building a bigger one soon."

Jessica looked at her own battered pack and felt a twinge of covetousness. Packs had always been heavy; lately, as

she began to feel her age, they had stealthily become more so. She'd never seriously minded before—the weight had seemed a worthwhile price for the things she got from solitude amid wilderness. Sure, she'd joked about it as much as anyone. In a wild moment or two she'd even fantasized about just such a device as Steve had, something that would put the solitude in easy reach, without the burden.

Now, with the reality staring her in the face, she wasn't so sure. She could have one now, if she really wanted it. All she had to do was ask Steve his price, pay him, and she would never again have to lug that "stone" to get to



the places she loved.

Neither would anyone else. If everyone could get there so easily, would her reasons for going still exist?

She shivered. The mountain laurel was in deep shade now, and looked as if someone had turned out the lights in the flowers. "It's getting late," she said. "Td better get supper."

She stood up and fetched her Svea, fuel bottle, mess kit, and food bag from her pack. Mealtime was commonly the hour of conviviality when backpackers shared a campsite—but tonight Jessica kept to herself, cooking and eating in a corner as if it were her last chance to experience solitude out here.

SLEEP WAS A BIT SLOWER THAN USUAL IN coming. Not only were there more than the average number of mice partying in the walls and rafters, but every time Jessica got close to sleep she started seeing dream images. Little boxes appeared in one after another of her favorite spots in the mountains, each spewing forth its own little mountain of litter. Each box was bigger and more professionally produced than the one before it, and when they got big enough

they started discharging people—city people who didn't belong out here. Faster and faster they came, until an unending line of them tramped along the trails, crushing leaves and grass and exposing bare soil to be washed away by the rain. Only when they wore the shelflike trail around Charlie's Bunion down to bedrock and polished it so smooth they lost their footing and slid off into the canyon did she finally settle into restful sleep.

Very early in the morning, though, she woke again, feeling less rested than she should. The laurel blooms gleamed in the morning sun, not only pink but bejewelled with dewdrops, but something was wrong. As lucidity trickled back into her brain, she realized that those dreams were trying to claw their way back to the surface. Worries commonly seem bigger than they should in the middle of the night, and dawn makes them laughable. This time the light of day brought only a stronger conviction that Steve's gadget was a real threat.

But there could just be something she chose to do about it.

Steve was already up and putting-in. Jessica crawled out, murmured a perfunctory, "Morning," pulled her boots on and went out to the latrine. She heard a few whistles and pops from the lean-to, but tried not to dwell on them. She took a meditative stroll up to the nearest open viewpoint and stood for several minutes staring at the blanket of clouds in the valley below. On the way back, she let her food bag down on its rope and took it back to the lean-to.

There was no wind yet, but the aromas swept over her as she came around to the open front: fresh bacon, fresh eggs, even fresh orange juice. She couldn't help herself. She blurted out, "Is that really fresh-squeezed?"

Steve looked up from the divided skillet—too big and heavy for backpacking—where bacon was sizzling on one side and scrambled eggs on the other. "Sure is. Like some?" He held a half-finished glass in one hand, but now he reached behind the stove and held another out to her—a real glass, big, ice-cold, brimful of frothy liquid with bits of pulp floating in it.

"Thank you," said Jessica. The gesture was a complete surprise, and made it harder to think about what she had to do—but didn't change the fact that she had to do it. She took a sip, pronounced it delicious (a drastic understatement), and then fished a freeze-dried omelet mix out of her bag and squirted some water from her canteen into a pan to reconstitute it.

"You don't have to do that," said Steve. "I've got plenty for both of us."

FLOODGATE

"That's all right," she said. "This tastes fine, out here."

"But if that tastes fine, think how much better the real thing would taste. Wouldn't you like to try it?"

The temptation was strong, but she was trying hard not to think about that. "No, thanks. If I don't eat it here, I have to carry it back." She was relieved when he didn't make the obvious answer.

She went ahead and fixed her omelet. Things did taste better outside, and that fact had always made freeze-dried food quite acceptable before. But never before had it had to stand side-by-side comparison with "the real thing," and more than once she found herself staring covetously at Steve's crisp strips of bacon and the deep, fluffy yellow of his eggs. No problem with storing it in bear country, either, she thought. That thing really is tempting. . . . It had, in fact, only one disadvantage—but that was a dilly.

They ate in silence for a while, and then she said, "Steve, did you say your transceiver was the only one of its kind?"

"I think so." His face opened up in an expansive smile. "There's my other one back home, of course, but together they're just one system. And I really don't think anybody else has one."

"I thought you said lots of people were working on applications."

"They are. There are enough outfits working on obvious things like package transport that the government's talking about regulating it. Old companies like UPS and Federal Express are really worried. But the government doesn't have any great interest in backpackers, and not many companies do either. I've been watching several publications and computer nets, and everything I've heard of is geared to fixed stations. I haven't heard anybody else say a word about portables, but it seems to me that that's a natural. When people are on the road—or the trail—that's just when they don't want to carry any more than they have to." He hesitated very slightly, then confided, "So if I can move fast enough, I think there's a real chance I can get rich on that slice of the market."

She looked into his face. Before, despite the cleverness of his gadget, she'd thought of him as "just a kid." Now she saw an intensity in his eyes that she'd missed before, and she realized she'd better take him a lot more seriously than that. She'd heard of boy geniuses who really did get rich off their inventions—wasn't there another Steve, even, back in the early days of

computers?—and she saw a very real possibility that this was one of them.

But if he was really the only one working this territory. . . .

"That's quite a dream," she said, "and I think you just might make it. But you know, there's a lot more to business success than ideas and technical know-how."

"Oh, I know that. I've been reading up on patents and business law and methods—and I've got an older brother with plenty of experience. Together, I think we can make a go of it."

Jessica did, too. She also found that despite herself, she was coming to like Steve. She found his intelligence refreshing and his enthusiasm contagious.

Jessica started seeing dream images—little boxes appearing in the mountains, each spewing forth its own little mountain of litter.

Only when she had her pack back together and was ready to leave could she bring herself to say it. "Steve?"

"Yes?" He hadn't even washed his things, but was just stacking them in his transceiver.

"I want you to think about something. I'm afraid it involves something very difficult."

"What's that?"

"Give up your dream. Please."

HE STARED AT HER FOR A LONG TIME, AS if he couldn't believe what she'd said. Finally he said, "What?"

"Give up your dream. Don't sell these things. Don't even tell people about them."

"Why on earth not? The portable transceiver is my big chance to make something of myself. How can you expect me to pass that up? Why should I?"

"You'll have other chances, Steve. You're a very bright boy. Your transceiver proves that. You'll have plenty of other ideas. Go with one of them—but think about its consequences first. This one—well, it will defeat its own purpose."

He was still staring. He had started

to like her, too, she realized suddenly, and now he felt as if she had betrayed him. She felt a little bit that way herself. He said, "I don't understand. Do you like to carry a heavy pack and eat cardboard food when you could walk free and unburdened and have everything fresh? My invention will open a whole new world—"

"That's the trouble," she said. "It'll open it too wide. Steve, why do you come out here?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why do you come to places like this? Can you put it into words?"

His face softened, became pensive. She could tell there was more on his mind than money. "Not easily," he said after some time. "It's... the feeling, I guess. There's a kind of... restfulness out here that's hard to find in the city. Being surrounded by all this, the grass and trees and sky and clouds, instead of concrete and cars..."

Jessica nodded approvingly. "That's how I feel, too. It's a chance to get away from other people and the artificial world they've built. The change makes it easier to face all that when you go back. But... How much will a pair of your transceivers cost?"

"Well... mine have cost me all I could earn for the last three years, and I'm not lazy. I guess you'd call it an expensive hobby. But if you look at it as an investment, I figure it'll all be worth it. The hardware's surprisingly simple, and getting cheaper every day. If we can attract enough buyers to get some economy of scale into making them—they'll be dirt cheap. Remember what happened to calculators and computers? In a few years, anybody who wants a pair of these will be able to buy one." He paused and added, "From me."

"Exactly. And when everybody can come out here that easily, will it still be worth coming?" Before he could answer, Jessica went on, talking with a growing feeling of urgency. "When I started doing this, hardly anybody else did. There was a real feeling of solitude, and that was a very important part of what I got from it. You didn't say it in so many words, but I think it's part of what you get from it, too. Will it still be as good if the trails and campsites are swarming with people?"

"I—"

"Last night two of us shared this lean-to. How would you have liked it if people were jammed in two to a bunk, with more on the floor, and still more in tents all around? I remember the last time it got like that, Steve. Turn your transceiver loose and it'll be that way again. Maybe even worse—and this

time it won't go away."

"No!" he broke in, suddenly defensive. "I don't believe it. It's gotten better now. The government recognized the overuse and set aside more land. And now—like you said, there were only two of us here last night. There's room for more people now."

"Not that many. More backcountry preserves aren't the only reason it's less crowded now. A lot of people tried it and quit because walking with a pack was too much work. Let everybody have these things, and all those people will be back, and more besides." She paused, calming herself with an effort. "You asked me if I liked carrying a pack. No, Steve, I don't—not for its own sake. And I like it less now than I did when I was younger. But I accept it as the price of something I value. Being out here without a lot of other people makes the effort worthwhile—and the effort is what makes it possible to find a place without a lot of other people. With transceivers, no place will be safe."

He was obviously shaken, but not defeated. "I don't believe it," he said again, though with less conviction. "You're exaggerating. My little gadget isn't going to turn the backwoods into Fifth Avenue. Sure, it'll bring in some more people; but there's room for them. It'll still be worthwhile." He looked at her and changed his tack. "Are you sure you're not just afraid of this because it's new and unfamiliar? Why don't you try it before you condemn it? When I make my new one, you can have this one, no charge."

"Not interested," she said quickly. (Was she afraid she'd say yes if she thought about it?) "Thanks anyway."

"What about when you get old? You said you like the difficulties less now than when you were young—er. Forgive me for bringing it up, but what will you do when you can't carry a pack anymore? Will you sit in the city and mope—or will you buy a pair of transceivers and keep coming out here?"

That hurt. Jessica was well aware that what Steve was describing could happen any year now. "Low blow, Steve," she muttered; but she knew he was showing wisdom, if not tact, beyond his years. "I'll worry about that when the time comes." Suddenly weary of this conversation, she bent down and shouldered her pack. "Meanwhile—will you at least think about what I said?"

For several seconds he said nothing. Then his friendly smile returned, almost as she had first seen it. "I'll think about it. Good-bye, Jessica. Have a good trip back."

"Good-bye, Steve. And... good luck."

SHE STARTED UP THE FEEDER TRAIL, WONDERING whether she dared hope that her words had made any impression at all. It was, she knew, a slim and provisional victory at best. But Steve was a good kid, a smart kid, and he might yet see things her way—though she knew she was asking a great deal of him.

In any case, there was nothing more she could do now. She was almost back to the main trail and a normal frame of mind when she stopped abruptly at a new sound ahead: laughter and foreign speech.

Just turning off toward the lean-to were a dozen clearly Japanese tourists—in business suits. A few of them car-



ried very slender attaché cases, with tasteful gold letters spelling out SHIMIZOTO TRANSONICS, but most were quite empty-handed.

And this spot was six miles out and three thousand feet up. She could think of only one way they could have gotten here, dressed and equipped as they were. Kept fit by corporate exercise programs and aided by an easy trail, they could handle the climb if they didn't have to carry appreciable weight. But they would have to carry food and drink and extra clothing—unless those cases contained very light versions of Steve's gizmo, to send them what they needed along the trail and take it away when they were finished with it.

Jessica stood numbly, nodding and mumbling perfunctory replies as they strode briskly past her, smiling jovially and wishing her a good morning with polite little bows. As the last one passed, the logo on the briefcases finally registered, and she knew with a sudden sinking feeling that it was too late for both her and Steve.

She stood awhile longer, heart

pounding and tears welling up in her eyes. Then she turned and hurried back to the lean-to, half hoping that she'd still somehow turn out to be wrong.

SHE'D OFTEN WONDERED WHY JAPANESE tourists always seemed to travel in herds. Moving into the lean-to, one of them for every bunk including the one Steve was vacating, they made quite a spectacle. The ones with briefcases had opened them and taken out a variety of flimsy metal and plastic modules which they were now assembling into an odd framework on the dirt floor in front of the fireplace. It took only seconds. The hiss as they adjusted it was brief, smooth, and barely audible; the pop at its end hardly worth mentioning. But there in the middle of the framework was a luxurious air mattress, already inflating from a gas cartridge attached to one end. The man standing closest pulled it out with brisk efficiency and handed it to another who whisked it to a bunk. Another pop, another mattress and so on.

Jessica watched silently from the door. Bracing herself on the frame as she felt her last hope drain away. She saw her dismay reflected in Steve's face (though for different reasons) as he stared wide-eyed at the big, efficient commercial unit. She almost felt sorry for him. "Who are you guys?" he asked. "I didn't know anybody was actually manufacturing..."

"Of course not," said one who seemed to be in charge. "Until now it's been very hush-hush, but that's behind us now. We're just this week launching our first advertising campaign, and this is part of it. Where better to look for eager customers than among people who actually have a load on their shoulders when our sales reps approach them? My card, sir—Akio Shimizoto, at your service." With a small but formal bow, he presented Steve with an engraved business card. Then his eye fell on Steve's home-made unit. "Ah, but I see you already have a transceiver."

"Yes. Steve's voice was hollow. "I thought it was going to make me rich. I should have known..."

Jessica had seen enough. She spun on her heel and started up the trail, hurrying to get away from there as fast as she could. Her pack weighed mockingly on her back and her vision was blurred. She knew her mind was too much on things other than where she was putting her feet, but she couldn't help it. How could she have been so stupid? If a kid could do it on his own, even a very bright kid like Steve, it should have been obvious that others

FLOODGATE

with far greater resources could already be doing it better. It had been too late—the era of backpacking as Jessica knew it had been dead—even before she met Steve.

Her mind was so full of the pain of that loss that she had nothing left for her usual careful attention to the trail. Her feet were running on automatic, and since they had no eyes they could not warn her away from the root that stuck up like a stirrup from the eroded trail. It caught her squarely across the toe and she pitched forward and to the side. She heard the whirring rattle as she fell, and subjective time slowed abruptly. She saw the snake basking on the rock at the side of the trail, but the shifting weight of her pack made it impossible to change her direction of fall. She did manage to jerk her hand away, but not enough. It landed on the snake's midsection and the snake reacted as it was programmed to react, its twin hypodermics piercing the back of her wrist. The pain was immediate and sharp, and Jessica's startled cry completely involuntary.

Despite the pain, already growing palpably and exceeded only by her embarrassment, part of her mind was already shifting to the peculiar calm detachment of emergency mode. As she lay sprawled by the trail, watching the rattler disengage from her wrist, her first conscious thought was, *Well, at least nothing's broken. But that snake's five feet long, and that's a bad place for a bite...*

The snake was free now, and starting to crawl off—sluggishly, because it was still early and it hadn't had time to absorb much solar warmth yet. Jessica tried to reach for her pack, to get her snakebite kit, but her hand hurt too much. She wasn't sure she could use it on her own hand anyway. She ventured a shout for help and was shocked at the weakness of her own voice. But it didn't matter. Her initial shriek had carried back to the lean-to, and she already heard boots running this way. A moment later Steve and half the Shimizoto sales team crested the rise in the trail and swooped down on her, full of concern.

They didn't ask her what had happened. They saw her hand, already swelling and bleeding profusely from twin punctures, and they saw the snake trying to escape into the bushes. The sales team chattered excitedly among themselves in Japanese. Shimizoto found a big rock and hefted it high above his head.

"Don't kill it!" Jessica managed to say sharply. "It's my own stupid fault, not the snake's. Let him go. Just do something about me."

Shimizoto hesitated, rock still held high. "But we have to find out what kind it is."

"I know what kind it is," Jessica said impatiently. "It's a timber rattlesnake, and big enough to be quite dangerous." She marveled at how the pain could keep growing. "There's a kit in my pack."

Steve dug into it quickly, following her directions to the right pocket. Shimizoto still didn't look convinced, but he put his rock down and watched

She saw the snake at the side of the trail, but the shifting weight of her pack made it impossible to change the direction of her fall.

the snake's tail disappear. He knelt next to Steve. Together they looked at the little yellow snakebite kit she'd carried so many years and never used. Steve took out the little blade, just the right length to make crosscuts the right depth, and started following the instructions for sterilizing it. As if from a great distance, Jessica heard Shimizoto say, "I'm not sure that's a good idea."

Steve protested, "But if we don't, she could—"

"She's had that kit a long time. That treatment's considered an extreme last resort now. It can do more harm than good—especially around a hand."

Steve went right on sterilizing. "What do you think we should do?" "She needs antivenin, as quickly as possible."

Even through the growing haze, she could hear the scorn in Steve's voice. "And I suppose you have some with you?"

"Well...not exactly..."

"Neither do I, and neither does she, and it would be hours before we could get her near a doctor. So that leaves this, to minimize the damage while one of you walks out for help."

Jessica braced herself as Steve brought the blade close to her hand, then paused again, blade poised. "Of course, if you have a two-way radio, we could call for a helicopter..."

"No radio," said Shimizoto. "Even if we had one, helicopters are very expensive, and not as fast as you'd like. A snakebite isn't like a broken leg."

It sure isn't, Jessica thought, staring in agony at her hand. It was so big now she could hardly recognize her fingers, and despite the blood she could see the skin turning colors she'd never thought possible. *Will you people please get on with it?* But when she tried to speak aloud, she found it too hard. The pain was just too much, consuming all her energy and attention.

"If my transceiver were bigger..." Steve mused. "But then, I don't even know if you can send living beings."

"You don't have to," Shimizoto said with a sudden hint of excitement. "All we need is the appropriate antivenin. That could be sent with no trouble at all."

"If" Steve said sourly, "we had a radio to ask for it." He was silent for several seconds. Then, looking as if the whole business was more painful for him than even for Jessica, he slowly moved the blade back toward her wrist—

And again jerked it away, his face suddenly alight with real excitement. "We don't need one!" he shouted, showing the blade back into its sheath and pulling a notebook and pen from his pants pocket. He opened it and scribbled furiously for a minute or so, then rose to his feet and dashed off, leaving Jessica perplexed.

"What's...what's he doing?" she asked thickly.

Shimizoto stroked her good hand soothingly. "You're going to be all right," he said. "He's sending a note to his mother."

SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER MUCH AFTER THAT. Vague impressions of motion and talk around her. Her own profuse sweating. Nausea. Above all, the incredible swelling and discoloration and pain. It couldn't have been long before she blacked out; she couldn't remember whether anybody gave her something to help that happen.

But when she returned to full consciousness she was in her sleeping bag, back in the lean-to. The sky was overcast and she didn't hear anything except the occasional croak of a distant raven. She looked around and, seeing no one, felt a twinge of fear that she was alone and helpless.

But then Steve came around the corner, and she realized with astonish-

ment that her hand no longer hurt. "Ah, you're awake," Steve said cheerily. "How do you feel?"

"Not bad." She pulled her hand out of the sleeping bag to make sure it was still there. It wasn't even bandaged, and she was immensely relieved to see genuine, recognizable fingers and knuckles. Their color wasn't quite normal, but it wasn't too far off. She could even wiggle them with surprisingly little discomfort. "What happened?"

He sat down on the foot of the next bunk. "We got you some antivenin. I wrote a note to Mom, telling her the fix you were in, and sent it home, down to Maryland, in my transceiver. Our family doctor's just around the corner from our house—and he sees snakebite just often enough that he always keeps a little serum on hand: He got it up here in eighteen minutes, along with instructions and some other things to help you rest and heal better. That hand should be as good as new in a couple of days." He smiled. "You were pretty lucky, you know. Snakebite treatments have been a pretty chancy thing until recently, but there've been some big advances in the last few years."

"I'd say I was lucky in more ways than that," she said. "Thanks an awful lot, Steve."

He shrugged. "What else could I

do? Anyway, you can read the whole story later. I saved the notes Dr. Dittmarr and I sent back and forth. He's been 'watching' you all the time."

"How long has it been? Where's Mr. Shimizoto?"

"They all left. He would have stayed, but I convinced him I could take care of you. It's been about a day. The doctor said you might be able to walk out today or tomorrow. What do you think?"

She sat up, paying close attention to how it felt. "I think I'll make it today, if I can get started not too much past noon. Gonna need some food first, though." She felt a little creaky, but she managed to get her food bag and stove and get some soup brewing without help. "Steve," she said as she stirred, "I'm sorry you got scooped."

"Really?" He laughed. "I was afraid you'd be angry that I used the transceiver to get your medicine. Aren't you?"

"Of course not. It saved my hand, maybe even my life. When my life's on the line, I'll use whatever's available to save it. And be grateful for it." She tasted the soup, turned the stove off, and started eating right from the pan.

Steve seemed a trifle confused. "Does this mean you've changed your mind about the transceivers?"

"For backpacking? Not in the least."

"But you said yourself you might

have died without it."

"That's right. That's a calculated risk I take every time I go into the wilderness. Take it away and people who don't belong out here are going to be coming out in a flood. I'd rather have the risk."

"Hm-m-m." Did that look in his eyes mean that he, too, was having second thoughts, now that the transceiver's future was no longer so closely tied to his own? Not likely, but an interesting possibility. . . .

"I'm glad you had yours here today," she said, "and I may well buy one for 'civilized' trips. But I hope I never see another one out here. Nothing personal, and I know it's a long shot, but I'll fight that flood any way I can."

"And if you can't hold it back?"

"Then I'll have to stay ahead of it, as long as I'm able." She took her pan outside to wash it, then came back in and repacked. "I'm about ready to leave. Walk out with me?"

"I'd planned to, if you'd let me. Don't want you alone if you have any more trouble." He hesitated. "I don't suppose you'd like me to transmit some of your stuff out, to make the going easier?"

She shouldered her pack and snorted, then grinned. "Not on your life—but thanks for the offer. Let's go." ■

OTHER DIMENSIONS

ROAD TO NOWHERE

Weekend gamblers returning to Philadelphia from the glittering casinos of New Jersey's Atlantic City are risking more than their money—they're gambling with their lives. Once one of the nation's safest highways, with only one fatality among the twenty-four million vehicles which had crossed it, the forty-four-mile Atlantic City Expressway has recently witnessed a rapid—and mysterious—rise in the number of deaths.

Last year, the death toll on the Expressway reached a record number. Of the ten crashes which claimed twelve lives, seven occurred in the westbound lane, all within a five-mile stretch in Winslow Township. And all of them



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occurred when the driver mysteriously fell asleep at the wheel of the car.

Lieutenant Thomas R. Burns, an investigator for the New Jersey State Police, thinks simple fatigue is the

most likely answer. "These are people who have just left the seashore, and they're about forty-five minutes into their drive, and driving fatigue causes them to fall asleep." This would make sense if the drivers were traveling late at night, after a long day at the gaming tables.

There's only one problem. All but one of the accidents took place during daylight hours, and under optimum driving conditions.

An examination of the road revealed no structural defects. A number of other explanations have been offered. Chemical pollution, for example, or a freak thermal inversion that traps carbon monoxide, or perhaps the hypnotic quality of that particular stretch of road. To date, no scientific evidence

has been found to support any of these theories. One observer suggested that perhaps the gamblers had used up their share of good fortune, leaving them more vulnerable to fatal misfortune.

State authorities have taken steps to combat the problem. They've offered booklets urging motorists to stop and rest at all toll plazas and tourist stops. They've stepped up patrols to try to reduce the number of accidents. They've even considered putting "rumble strips" along the shoulders to jolt motorists awake. So far, it hasn't begun to change the odds.

"It's a very perplexing problem," says Lieutenant Burns. "You don't want to say we're just running into a string of bad luck."

—Paul Learn

DREAMS OF DROWNING

HE CAME OUT OF A sound sleep slowly, and slowly became aware of his surroundings. Hard. Hard? Cramped. Wet. The sound of running water. He opened his eyes.

The first thing he noticed was his little eight-year-old daughter sitting on the bathroom counter, wearing her Care Bears nightshirt, staring at him. The next thing he noticed was that he was chained to the bathtub, unable to move, and the water was running, fast and cold. All of a sudden very fast and very cold.

"Amber. Amber, honey, this isn't very funny; please let me out."

She made no response, just sat there and stared at him, kicking her small feet against the cabinet.

This is crazy. Little girls don't chain people to bathtubs and turn on the water.

"Amber, Amber sweetheart, this has gone far enough; either you let me out or—"

Or what? Either she'd let him out, or he'd drown. Of all the ways to die, drowning was the one he dreaded most. The water was up to his neck and rising rapidly.

"Amber honey, please let Daddy out."

David Gardner is a man afflicted with nightmares of the most terrifying sort. But nightmares sometimes reveal truths we would otherwise never see. . . .

WELLS LORD HOUGH

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN LABBE

He tried to keep the panic out of his voice. "Amber, please. Please let me out."

She just sat there. What the hell was wrong with her? Panic gripped him. The water was up to his chin. It lapped around his lips. He arched his back to keep the water away from his mouth; all it did was throw a wave over his face, washing up into his nose just as he inhaled. He choked; his mouth filled with water and he swallowed it, desperate to take a breath.

Cold air on his face. "Amber!" he screamed. "Amber!"

Then the water covered his mouth and nose for good. He held his breath as long as he could. Only when his mouth opened to inhale cold hard death did he hear her voice, distant, through

the water:

"Bye-bye, Daddy, bye-bye."

HE SCREAMS AND COMES AWAKE, heart racing, sweat pouring off his body, breath coming in ragged hoarse gasps. His wife, lying next to him, stirs and wakens.

"Dave." She is concerned. "Are you all right?"

He is slow to answer. He takes several deep breaths, trying to calm the rapid beating of his heart.

"This had to be one of the worst." He takes another deep breath, holds it for a few moments, then slowly lets it out. "This time Amber tried to kill me by chaining me to the tub."

"Amber, of all people!" She says it accusingly, as if he deliberately chose to have their daughter murder him in his dreams.

Change the subject. "I always hated the idea of drowning. Hated it."

"It isn't a phobia about water or anything, Dave. You swim."

He lies back down on the bed, quiet for a moment. Then: "Sandy, what the hell is wrong with me? I've never had nightmares like this before; I'm almost afraid to go to bed at night. Afraid to go to bed, just like some little kid."

She says nothing. He hears her answer anyway.

"Yes," he says. "I'll go to the doctor."

"Lawrence Manning," she says. "At the Executive Plaza, suite two hundred."

"Tomorrow. If he'll see me. I've got to do something about these dreams."



DREAMS

She squeezes his hand, then rolls over and goes right back to sleep. Easy for her. Not for Dave. He lies there for a long time, exhausted, yet too wary to sleep.

THE SMELL OF COFFEE AND BACON, THE usual noise of breakfast being prepared, Amber's cheerful chatter. Last night could have been last year; Dave wonders why he agreed to see the doctor today. Doesn't matter—no one can possibly get an appointment the very day they call. I can put it off. The dreams will stop by themselves. It's nothing but stress.

Sandy talks about the trip to his parents' summer cabin in the Smokies. When to leave, what to take, what not to take, what to do before they go.

Time for work. As usual, as soon as he picks up his briefcase Amber slides off her chair and runs to him. He sets down the briefcase. She jumps, he catches her, lifts her up, hugs her, feels her small arms tight around his neck.

"Bye-bye, Daddy, bye-bye."

Her voice is the same as it was in the dream. She even has the same smile. All the terror of the night before comes back at once; he doesn't even realize he has let go of her until she starts to cry. Even then it is Sandy, not Dave, who rushes to her, helps her up, checks her for breaks and bruises.

"He dropped me!"

Dave mumbles an apology. "An accident," he says. "Sorry," he says.

He rushes from the kitchen. By nine o'clock he's at work; by nine thirty-five he has an appointment with Dr. Manning for mid-afternoon. "He's been expecting you to call," that's what the receptionist said. "He can fit you in today." Sandy's had a good long talk with him. But Dave doesn't mind. He keeps thinking of Amber sprawled on the floor where he let her fall.

DR. MANNING IS YOUNG AND BUILT LIKE an athlete; which means he makes enough money that he has time to work out or run or swim. Or maybe he's just an efficient person. He gets right to the point. The dreams, Dave. Tell me about the dreams.

Dave tells him, and tells about dropping Amber this morning. "That was a reflex," says Manning. "Don't feel guilty about it, you couldn't help it." Then he asks the questions Dave has expected all along—the questions Dave has been asking himself. Trouble at home? Sex problems? Job stress? Parent or sibling sick or dying or recently dead? Like a *Reader's Digest* questionnaire.

Answer: No. No, no, and no. Everything's fine. I've been married ten years, I'm still in love with my wife, more than ever, and I love my little girl.

"Oh, well, then, this will take longer," says Manning. "Can you see me twice a week?"

"Yes," says Dave.

"Everything will be all right," says Manning. "You aren't crazy, in case you wondered. Your dreams may be unpleasant, but at least you know that in the real world little girls in Care Bears night-

shirts don't go around drowning people."

Dave doesn't go back to work; they owe him the time off. He stops at the mall and buys Amber a large stuffed white unicorn. She saw it a few weeks ago. I'm paying for guilt, he thinks. I'm buying forgiveness.

Damn right he is, and it works. Amber loves the unicorn, Amber loves her daddy, Amber forgives him.

"We talked when she came home from school," says Sandy. "She already forgave you. She didn't need the peace offering."

"I did," says Dave.

Tonight is different from most nights. He didn't bring his briefcase home. He has no work to do. They play Thundercats and Skip-30. Amber wins. Dave doesn't even have to cheat to help her.

Later as she's getting ready for bed, she calls for him to shampoo her hair, the way he did when she was much younger. An hour later she's in bed. He checks on her. She's asleep, fresh-scrubbed, her hair still a little damp, a faint smile on her face. He leans over to kiss her. She smells of shampoo and baby powder. How can I be afraid of her, even in my dreams?

THE THREE OF THEM WERE AT A PARK having a picnic. Amber was jumpy, excited. Finally she revealed her surprise. She had a unicorn hidden in the nearby trees. She led it out into the open. "He does whatever I want," she said. Amber and Sandy took turns riding around and around the park.

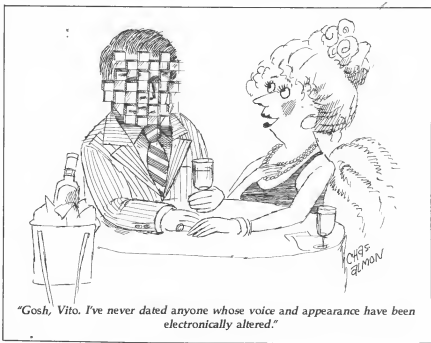
"Daddy, Daddy, it's your turn! It's your turn to ride Uni now. Come on, Daddy! Uni's waiting!"

He wasn't sure what to expect. He hadn't ridden a horse since he was a child. That one had a saddle and followed the horse ahead of it. The unicorn wasn't like that. He could feel the muscles twisting, knotting, stretching between his legs. It moved so quickly, bounding over the ground. Too fast. He gripped the mane, felt the wind whip by his face, the thick hot body under him bound and leap—

Somebody screamed. Dave felt like screaming, too. The unicorn never came down from its last leap. It soared through the air, rising over the trees, gliding out over the lake.

Then it dipped its head, kicked its hind legs. Dave bopped forward, sprawled over the unicorn's head, clutched at the horn. He felt it tear him open, neck to groin, as he pitched headfirst downward toward the lake.

The cold of the water surrounded him. Swim, he told himself. You can swim to shore. It's not far, the lake isn't



"Gosh, Vito. I've never dated anyone whose voice and appearance have been electronically altered."

deep. But the warmth fled from his body, his arms grew heavy and stiff, he tried to move but he lay still on the water.

The shore was so close. And there stood Amber, a life preserver in her hands. "Amber, throw me the life preserver!" he shouted.

She didn't move.

"Amber, throw it to me! Listen to me!"

"Uni says I can't," said Amber.

"You have to!"

"Bye-bye, Daddy."

There was the unicorn, not a yard away, standing in the water, regarding him with placid, empty eyes. He used his last strength to leap at it. He tore open its skin, pulled huge gobbets of fluff out of its body—

"DAVE! DAVE! STOP IT! DAVE!"

He is in Amber's room, the ruined unicorn in one hand, the last of the stuffing in the other. White fluff is scattered across the room. Amber is curled up in the corner of her room, the corner farthest from her father, sobbing hysterically. Sandy snatches the last shreds of unicorn out of his hands.

"What are you trying to do to her!" Sandy cries.

AT FIRST HE DRIVES IN A PANIC, SPEEDING, running through red lights in the empty predawn streets. Then he gets onto I-85, northbound or southbound, it doesn't matter, the freeway runs east to west here anyway. All he can think about is Amber's face as she watched her father murder the unicorn he brought her.

Hours later. Blue lights flash behind him. Is he in Virginia or South Carolina? Which way was he heading?

"Was I speeding?" he asks.

"Not lately, anyway," says the patrolman. "Are you David Gardner?"

"Yes."

"Your wife is worried about you. She called us, and so did Dr. Manning. I'd like to take you back home."

He's wearing his bathrobe. All he has with him are his car keys.

"I'm not dressed. What about the car?"

"Your wife has arranged for it to be picked up, sir. And she'll have clothes for you at Dr. Manning's office."

That's Sandy—she always takes care of the details. "I can't just walk into the Executive Center in a bathrobe. Especially not if I drive up in a police car."

"It isn't at the Executive Center."

"Yes, it is, I was there yesterday."

"Then he must have two offices."

Dr. Manning has two offices. This one is a private clinic, secluded, surrounded by trees. No one sees Dave

walk in wearing a bathrobe.

Sandy sits silently in the private office while he dresses. There isn't a mirror, but he knows how he must look. Eyes red, hair tousled and unwashed. She hands him a comb. His hair feels oily and slimy. He wants a bath.

When Manning comes in, Dave tells the dream, tells why he was tearing up the unicorn. At the end, when he talks about Amber, imagines how it must have been for her to wake up and see her father doing this, he breaks down and sobs.

"You're tired," says Sandy.

"That's right," says Dr. Manning. "Right now you need sleep. You have



sick time coming. I've had my receptionist call your office. Insurance will cover your time off."

"I can't go home," says Dave. "I can't face Amber. She can't face me."

"She's more resilient than you think," says Dr. Manning. "Most children are. And you need to be with her. Dave, your daughter isn't trying to kill you."

"I know she isn't."

"You need time together. She needs to know that whatever your problem is, you aren't rejecting her. Do you understand that? What you do in your sleep is a problem for her now, and so you have to help her understand that you love her more than ever when you're awake."

It makes sense; Dave can see that it's the right thing to do. On the way home he insists that they buy another unicorn. He falls asleep on the couch in the living room.

He does not dream. He wakes up to find Amber petting his hand. "I like my new unicorn even better," she says. "I'm sorry you're sick."

"Me too, Sweetheart," he says.

"Mommy says you aren't mad at me," she says.

He hugs her. "Honey, you never did anything to be mad at. Are you sure you aren't mad at me?"

"I was scared," she says.

"Me too, Sweetheart."

THEY GO TO HIS PARENTS' CABIN IN THE mountains. They're a week early, but there's no reason to wait, now that he's staying home from work anyway. He needed this rest. He was under too much stress at work. Now he can hardly remember what it was he was working on so intently for the last few weeks. He can hardly remember what his job is. He doesn't want to remember. He wants to be with Sandy and Amber.

They stop in a motel on the way. Amber sleeps in one bed, Sandy and Dave in another. He dreams again, and wakes up frantic. He was in water again, as usual, but this time he couldn't swim because he was in handcuffs. And there was Sandy, holding the keys behind her back, watching him lift his manacled hands above his head, crying for help before he drowned.

Awake now, he hears water running. Sandy isn't in the bed beside him. She's filling the tub. She's going to handcuff him and drown him in the tub in this motel. She and Dr. Manning have been planning this all along.

Sandy is swallowing a sleeping pill. The water is still running because it sometimes takes her two glassfuls to get a pill down. The tub is dry.

She makes him explain why he ran into the bathroom.

"You thought I was going to drown you?"

"I was still half asleep. At least I didn't wake Amber."

In bed again, he begins to understand some things. "I think the dreams aren't because of stress," he says. "The stress is gone, I still dream."

"Go to sleep, Dave. Dr. Manning's going to figure it out."

"He says I've got to figure it out, and I think I have. This last dream, you holding the keys like that, and you didn't throw them to me, it was like—I think these dreams are a message that you and Amber don't need me anymore. That I'm supposed to leave, let you get on with your lives without me."

"If you think we want you to leave us, then you really are crazy."

"Maybe it isn't what you need. Maybe it's what I need."

"Chains and handcuffs and a unicorn tearing you apart," says Sandy. "You think we're stifling you?"

"No, I don't think that, not with my mind. Not awake. Maybe it's just, I don't know, a midlife crisis or some-

DREAMS

thing, maybe I just need to get away for a while. I don't want to, but maybe I—"

He can't think of any words to finish.

She says nothing for a long time. Then she rolls close to him in bed, so he can feel her breath on his cheek, her lips brushing his skin. "That's the biggest bunch of bullshit I ever heard," she says.

"Me too." He laughs. So does she. They make love very slowly and carefully, so Amber doesn't wake up.

THE PLACE SHOULD BE FULL OF MEMORIES of his childhood. He came here every summer as a kid. But it's memories of Sandy that come to him as they drive up. This is the cabin where they spent their wedding night. Contrary to fashion, it was the first time for both of them. It was here also that Amber was conceived, two summers later. Since Dad went into the rest home, though, it hasn't seemed right to come here and enjoy the cabin he built with his own hands. Amber doesn't know this place. She explores eagerly, running up and down the paths. He'll take her riding at the stables, if they still rent horses there. He'll hike with her up to the waterfall. It won't be long till the ground is thick with bright-colored leaves—they'll collect them together, bury each other in piles.

Today, though, she wants to go fishing.

"I'll go buy some groceries," says Sandy. "They'll take a check at that little store we passed, won't they?"

"If you have nine forms of ID."

"That's why I carry such a big purse," she says.

"I want to catch a halibut," says Amber. "It's my favorite fish."

"Halibuts are rare in this lake," says Dave. "But maybe we'll be lucky."

They are very lucky. The boat is in good condition in its small boathouse; the oars are even chained in place. Dave wipes away the spiderwebs, loads in the rods and gear, and pushes out into the water. He isn't in great shape for rowing, but then he isn't going to be racing today. He rows in to shore and helps Amber climb aboard.

"I got my feet wet," she says.

"Welcome to the wonderful world of fishing," he answers.

She makes a face.

Hardly anyone is on the lake now. He remembers fishing in the shade of a gnarly old tree, and sure enough, there it is, right where it should be, only

closer. The lake is smaller.

He baits the lines and puts them in the water. They talk now and then. He enjoys the quiet and the company of his daughter.

Soon Amber's pole dips into the water. "I got a bite!" She jumps up, reaches for her pole.

The boat isn't in such good condition after all. Her foot goes through a rotten place in the wood. Water immediately starts flowing into the boat.

Dave rushes to help pull her foot back up. All he can think is: what if the boat sinks and she's stuck? As he lifts her foot out, it wedges; then the rotten wood crumbles, her foot is free, and

He was in water again. This time he couldn't swim because he was in handcuffs. And there was Sandy, holding the keys, watching him cry for help.

water is gushing into the boat. Far too fast to bail. Far too fast to row to shore.

Amber can swim. Ever since she was three she's been swimming like a fish. Dave can also swim. Now that Amber isn't stuck, they'll have no trouble getting to shore. The gnarly tree is right there.

"Hit the water," he says. "Swim to shore." He points. "That way."

She rolls over the side of the boat, treads water. "Aren't you coming?"

"No reason to lose the rods," he says. "Go on, hurry up."

She swims away. He rummages through the water, the drifting gear, the floating oars. He finds the rods. The fish Amber caught is still tugging at her line. The boat is mostly underwater now. Forget the rods. He jumps into the water.

But his foot is tangled in the oar-chain. He is thrown against the edge of the boat. He feels a searing pain in his ankle. He is underwater, confused.

He splashes to the surface, but he can't tread water properly with his ankle caught. Half outside the boat the way he is, he can't balance anywhere. Underwater again, he gropes for the chain, tugs against the weight of the

boat, trying to free his foot. The chain only tightens against his ankle.

He kicks downward and for a moment he achieves a kind of equilibrium—the wooden boat floating just under the surface of the water, his face above water. But the boat is sinking further and faster.

Amber is standing on the bank among the roots of the tree. He must call to her. He must say, "Help me!"

But if he does, what will she do? "Swim to him and pull him out? Throw him a line? There is no line. She cannot pull him out. All she can do is stand on the bank and hear him shout; watch him flail his arms and gasp for air; scream as he gulps water, sputters, goes under; and stare endlessly at the weakening ripples on the surface of the lake that soon disappear, leaving no sign at all to mark his grave, no monument but in the memory of his daughter.

He thinks, This is what I saw in my dream: Amber watching helplessly as I die. If I call to her, I will hold her here to see. She will always remember her daddy calling her to help, and how she let him die.

The dream was not sent to save my life. It was sent so I could keep her memory clean.

He does not shout for her to help him. Instead, he calls, "I'm tangled up here, Amber! Voice calm, measured, almost casual. "Can you run get help? Someone to help me pull the boat out?"

He knows she can't get help in time. It's too far around the edge of the lake back to the cabin, and Sandy won't be back by now, anyway. Nobody else is at the lake; there's no one for Amber to bring. But in searching for help, she won't be here to see.

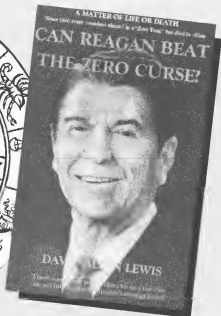
The boat is pulling sharply downward. He treads water more furiously, swimming upward with all his strength, yet trying to keep his voice calm. "Hurry, honey, but if you can't find anybody, it's no problem. It won't be your fault, okay?"

"Bye-bye, Daddy, bye-bye!" she calls. Then she turns and runs away, into the trees.

"Bye, honey. I love you!" he calls. The boat slides under him. He pitches over. He can't swim his way back to the surface. He can't remember which way is up. He can't see in the muddy water. He can't hold his breath any longer. The boat leads him down. Leashed, he takes a cold deep breath, then meekly follows into the night.

He hears his daughter's voice, far away. "Bye-bye, Daddy!" But it is a dream again, her voice, and it does not wake him up.

OTHER DIMENSIONS



LOST IN THE STARS?

Okay, we admit it. We might have been just a little bit hasty in declaring (August '88 TZ) that Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis had locked up the "Zone Vote" by proclaiming Laurie Cabot "Official Witch of Salem." In light of recent revelations, there's a political figure we may have overlooked.

As we reported in April ("Ronald Reagan vs. 'The Zero Factor'"), our fortieth president may become the first to beat the "jinx" some believe is responsible for the deaths of the last seven presidents elected in a year ending in zero. There has been much speculation about the source of the pattern, ranging from the pragmatic (mere coincidence) to the political (an ongoing conspiracy) to the supernatural (an American Indian curse). However, a recently published book—*Can Reagan Beat the Zero Curse?* by David Allen Lewis (New Leaf Press, Box 1045, Harrison, AR 72601)—points to a far more sinister cause, as well as offering an explanation of how Ronald Reagan has thus far escaped the fate of his predecessors.

After a detailed, thorough, and relatively unbiased examination of the histories of the seven "zero factor" presidents, Lewis rules out mere chance or human conspiracy, to finger the true culprit—Satan, the Prince of Evil. Although the seven presidents were all men of God, they all had deep human weaknesses, and were surrounded by corrupt influences. Because the faith of America's people was weak, Lewis maintains, Evil overwhelmed them. Why, then, did Ronald Reagan survive? According to Lewis, Reagan is the first president to wholeheartedly accept divine protection. Furthermore, President Reagan benefited from an additional spiritual edge: the power of prayer.

"Early in 1980, months before the election," writes Lewis, "I appeared on the Jim Bakker Program. . . . Jim knew about my interest in the zero-year mystery and asked me a lot of questions about it. I then asked the millions of viewers to pray for the president elected in November."

Ronald Wilson Reagan, a devout Christian, won that election. Seventy days later, John Hinckley made an attempt on Reagan's life. "We believe," Lewis writes, "that it is prayer

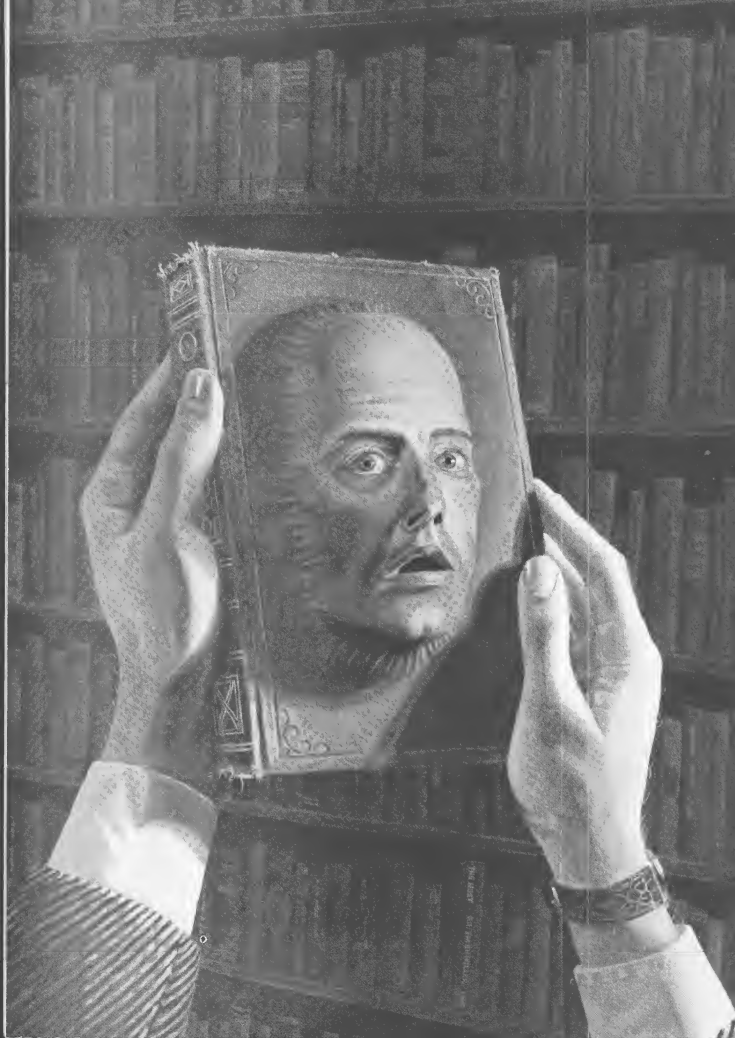
that kept Reagan alive in the Hinckley assault. It is a sure thing that many Christians were aware of the need for prayer and were praying for President Reagan. Politics has nothing to do with it. This spiritual warfare is beyond all such considerations." But if Lewis's theory is correct, the war may not be over.

In his headline-making memoir *For the Record*, former White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan claimed that First Lady Nancy Reagan regularly consulted celebrity astrologer Joan Quigley for advice, and reportedly influenced the timing of the President's actions to take advantage of favorable astrological aspects. The Reagans' long-standing interest in the stars was apparently heightened by the attempt on the President's life. Mrs. Reagan's press secretary, Elaine Crispin, recently told *Newsweek*: "She [Nancy] was frightened. I don't think any of us appreciated how much. So if she could get a little comfort and consolation from astrology, why not?"

Here's the problem: Many Fundamentalists consider astrology a Satanic practice, a seemingly harmless superstition that can lead to graver forms of idolatry and witchcraft. The Reagans' flirtation with such a practice, in their eyes, may leave the President open to the darker influences he has so far evaded. But President Reagan seems unwilling to repudiate it. When asked point-blank at a recent press conference whether he believes in astrology, the President replied: "I don't mean to offend anyone who does believe in it, or engages in it. . . . I've not tied my life by it, but I won't answer the question the other way because I don't know enough about it to say is there something to it or not."

One final note: A number of Fundamentalists, including best-selling author Hal Lindsey, have suggested that these are the "Final Days" predicted in the book of Revelation. Some have even suggested that the prophesied battle of Armageddon will take place in our lifetime, with the forces of Good ranged against the forces of Evil. Will the President's sympathy for astrology affect the balance? The answer, as they say, may be written in the stars. . . .

—Tappan King



THE NAME ON THE BOOK

Item: An old, worn book found on a table in a curio shop. A volume unlike any other, written in an unknown language. A book that holds the key to one man's fate. . . .

RICHARD WILSON

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER R. EMSHWILLER

*"...this is no book.
Who touches this, touches a man."
—Walt Whitman*

Tuesday

HE HAD SEEN THE BOOK AT THE BACK OF THE SHOP IN A SECTION marked CURIOSA. The name on the book was his, Charles Evans. The letters were in black.

There was no other wording on the cover or the spine. No publisher's name. No title, unless *Charles Evans* was the name of the book.

The cover—there was no jacket—had seen use but was not worn. The binding was real cloth, scarlet.

Charles riffled the pages, back to front, with his left hand. Many pages at both ends of the book were blank but there was printing on the pages between. It was in a language he didn't recognize.

Curious. Well, that was what the sign meant. Interesting. He saw the book shop owner look at him as if he expected a question or a comment but Charles said only, "How much is it?"

The bookseller, who could not have known his customer's name, said, "Twelve dollars."

Charles Evans hesitated. "It seems a lot."

"It's in excellent condition, with a good binding. Tell you what. If you don't like it, bring it back and I'll refund your money. Tomorrow or any time."

"All right."

The bookseller took the credit card and put it and the charge slip through the machine. If he saw Charles Evans's name on the card or noticed the signature he made no comment. Nor did he remark on the fact that Charles had not opened the book after once riffling through it. He wrapped it and gave Charles the receipt. "Enjoy it," he said.

As he left the shop Charles saw a lone picket with a sign that read: BOYCOTT LEFTIST, NEO-HUMANIST "LITERATURE." SUPPORT THE GOOD BOOK ASSN.

Charles's wife, Irma, was not home from her job as a saleslady. She worked longer hours in the specialty shop than her husband did at the accounting firm in which he was a partner.

Charles made himself a drink and unwrapped the book. He went to his easy chair and turned on the reading light. He looked again at the name that stood alone on the front and on the spine. The jet-black letters stood out against the vivid scarlet of the binding.

He held the book in his lap, opening it as he would a newspaper, from the back, and turned the pages individually until he came to one with printing on it. There were only a few words, a dozen or so in that unrecognizable language, at the top of the left-hand page.

As Charles stared at them, trying to find some meaning in them, they disappeared, leaving that page as blank as all those that followed it.

"Curious," Charles said again to himself. He thought this must be a trick volume, such as a stage magician might use in his act.

BOOK

He closed the book as his wife came in. She had stopped at a take-out food place after work and he went to help her in the kitchen. As they ate chow mein and noodles his wife said, "This is some of that low-sodium soy sauce we saw advertised. What do you think of it?"

"It's not very salty, Irma."

"That's the idea. We're getting to that age where we should pay more attention to our diet."

"I bought a book today," Charles said, sprinkling salt over the mixture on his plate. "Funny thing, it has my name on it."

"Charles Evans? Like that—no middle initial?"

"That's right. I wondered, why me? It's not a famous name."

"It's two-thirds of a famous name," Irma said. "Charles Evans Hughes. Supreme Court—chief justice. Ran for President once, I seem to remember."

"I don't know. Didn't we see his picture on a stamp?"

"Probably. What is the book, a novel?"

"I don't think so. I'll show you later."

She went into the workroom to do some sewing after examining the book briefly and saying, "It doesn't seem worth twelve dollars, but if it makes you happy..."

Charles went to his chair. He opened the book at the front and thumbed past the many blank pages to where the unfamiliar printing began, in the middle of the right-hand page. The facing page and some pages before that looked as if there had been printing there too. If he held the book a certain way under the light he could make out impressions in the thick white paper.

Charles had a colleague, Bob Granger, who was the bursar at the university. Granger might know a professor who could identify the language for him and Charles decided he'd call the next day. He put one of his business cards at the page where the printing began, as a bookmark.

He picked up the evening paper, reading it from back to front as usual. In the local news section he saw a small display ad that said a Rally for Good Literature would be held in the Village Square Saturday at 8:30 p.m. "Join your

neighbors in support of the Good Book Assn.," it said. "Stamp Out Smut. Root Out Wrong-Thinking. Down with neo-Humanism." Charles wasn't sure, but he thought neo-Humanists were people who believed in evolution.

In the television section of the newspaper he saw that the Tuesday night movie was one he and Irma had missed when it first came out. He called to her and they watched it together.

Wednesday

THINGS WERE BUSY AT THE OFFICE THE next day and Charles had no time to call Granger at the university. That night he and Irma played bridge with a

As Charles stared at the words, trying to find meaning in them, they disappeared, leaving that page as blank as all those that followed it.

couple across town, as they had every Wednesday for a year or so.

Thus Charles didn't look into his namesake volume again for about forty-eight hours.

Thursday

SETTLED IN HIS EASY CHAIR AFTER SUPPER, he opened the book from the back, as before. It seemed to him there were more blank pages than he remembered, but he thought he could be mistaken.

At the front of the book, though, he was convinced that the card he'd used as a bookmark was not where he'd put it. He distinctly remembered having inserted it at the first page on which there was printing. Now there were several blank pages after the card.

"Irma," he called. "Were you looking at my book?"

"Do you mean the one on bridge you brought home from the office? That's in the bedroom if you want it."

"No, I meant the one with my name on it."

"Oh, that. It was on the table next to your chair. I haven't touched it. Isn't it there?"

"Yes, it's here."

"Is something wrong?"

"No. Never mind."

There was definitely something wrong. He'd been thinking about it a lot during the past two days. His work and his bridge game had suffered because of his preoccupation with the book. His wife had thought it was merely woolgathering, as she put it, but Charles was getting a feeling that the book was a record of his life.

At the front of the book, it seemed to him, that record was erased as he lived it. He believed that if he could make out the language, he could read ahead and learn what would happen to him the next day and on future days.

Or maybe he would learn what had happened to him, as if his life was foreordained, or had already been lived (by another Charles Evans?) and that he was living it again with no power to change it.

Now he also began to believe—he knew this feeling was irrational—that the printing at the back of the book represented, in a different way, the end of his life. He was almost convinced that as the unreadable last words vanished the date of his death came closer.

He pored over the newly blank pages, holding them this way and that to catch the light, trying to make out the faint impressions which only a couple of days ago had been printer's ink on the paper.

He wondered if he could count how many lines of type disappeared in an hour. Then, by multiplication and extrapolation, maybe he could tell how long he had to live—how many years (months? weeks? days?). It was not a thick book, he realized, and that could have ominous significance. It was crazy, but he was beginning to feel frightened.

He hadn't wanted to disturb his bursar friend at home but now he telephoned. Granger's wife answered. "Oh, hello, Mr. Evans. Bob has mentioned your name. No, I'm sorry; Bob's off at a conference in Toronto. He won't be back till Sunday. Yes, I'll tell him you called."

Friday

CHARLES HADN'T SLEPT WELL. He was awake and up an hour earlier than usual. He sat at the kitchen table with the book, drinking black coffee and trying to estimate how many lines or pages had been erased overnight.

When Irma started down the stairs, he got up guiltily and put the book on the top shelf of the bookcase just off the kitchen in the living room.

"It'll be home late tonight," he told his wife. "We're still busy with Stoffer-son Brothers's annual report. They al-

The late Richard Wilson, a prolific science fiction author since the 1940s, won the Nebula Award for his 1968 novelette "Mother to the World."

ways wait till the last minute and now we have to break our necks to get it out in time for their board meeting Monday."

"You did toss and turn. Did you get any sleep at all?"

"I'll be all right."

That night Charles was home by nine, earlier than he expected. He'd eaten a sandwich at the office and wanted only a drink. Irma joined him. He automatically headed for his easy chair, then said, "Where's the book?"

"That book again? If it isn't by your chair I don't know where it could be."

"I remember now. I put it in the bookcase."

"Then that's where it is. No, wait—this bookcase? Which shelf?"

He sprang from his chair. "The top shelf. There are no books on the top shelf."

"That's because I sorted through everything yesterday and weeded out the ones for the church sale—the old book club novels, the paperback mysteries. I put them together on the top shelf. Then today, after you left, I packed them in a carton and dropped it off on my way to work."

"The top shelf. That's where I put my book before you came down this morning. You must have seen it."

"Obviously I didn't," she said. "Well, it's at the church now. It's safe enough there, I imagine. You can get it back tomorrow morning." She laughed. "Of course you might have to buy it back. Cost you a dime, probably."

He didn't laugh.

Saturday and Thereafter

AT THE ACTIVITIES ROOM OF THE CHURCH they found piles of clothing, bric-a-brac, dishes, lamps, furniture, and assorted whatnots, but no books. Mrs. Tremper, who was in charge of the pricing, said, "The books? No. I found last year that books are more trouble than they're worth. I told that to the solicitation committee but obviously it didn't register with them. They must have solicited several hundred. Called a dealer and he made an offer for all of them. He carted them off to his shop yesterday afternoon."

"Including those I dropped off yesterday morning?" Irma asked.

"I wasn't here then, but probably. He took all the books, as I said."

"Do you have his name and address?" Charles asked. He was trying not to be angry.

"I put his card somewhere," Mrs. Tremper said. She looked around vaguely.

Charles was about to explode when his wife said "Would this be it?" and plucked a card from where it had been

wedged in the frame of a dusty mirror.

Mrs. Tremper admitted that it was. "The sale doesn't start till noon but if there's anything you want now we'll put a SOLD sign on it for you."

Charles took his wife's arm. "Let's go, Irma."

The dealer's card showed that his resale shop, The Second Time Around, was in the Village Square, the old part of town. The better shops had abandoned the square for the outlying shopping centers. Fewer people shopped downtown now and most of the old stores there were closed Saturdays and Sundays.

The Second Time Around was no exception. A sign in the window said HOURS: MON-FRI 10-6. There was no name or telephone number, nor was there any on the card the owner had left at the church.

But the book was there. Charles saw it next to a volume on evolution in a jumble of books on a wheeled table beyond a steel expansion grill that closed off the vestibule. An old sign stuck in among the books said *Second Hand Prose, 25¢ each, 5/\$1*. It was clear that the dealer didn't consider the book valuable enough to be brought inside the store itself.

The scarlet binding of the Charles Evans book seemed to glow in the dim recess of the vestibule. "There it is," Charles said.

"I see it. Quite a comedown from twelve dollars."

"No need to rub it in," he said. "Look. I could almost reach through the grill and get it right now."

"If you had arms like an ape. Let it

go till Monday, Charles."

"If I had a stick or something—an umbrella—I could reach in and pull that table up to the grill."

"And get arrested for breaking and entering."

"I wouldn't have to break or enter."

"For shoplifting then. Let's go, Charles. Be sensible."

Reluctantly, he let Irma lead him to the car.

THEY HAD GONE TO A RESTAURANT FOR dinner but he barely ate any of it.

"It is the book, isn't it?" Irma said. "Not the Stoffersen account at all. Don't worry. It'll still be there Monday."

He said under his breath, "But will it?"

She looked at him sharply. "What did you say?"

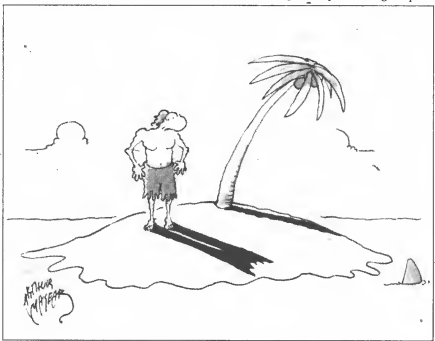
He was in distress. It had slipped out. How many days of his life would erase themselves over the weekend? "I said, 'Have some pie?' I'll have the blueberry. Damn waiter took my plate away before I finished. You want the blueberry or the apple?"

"Oh, Charlie, I thought—never mind. You have the pie; I'll just have coffee. Then let's get you home where you can relax."

"Okay. Damn the pie. Let's just go."

But he couldn't relax. Irma turned on the television to try to distract him but soon there was an interrupt bulletin from the local newsroom:

"What was to have been a peaceful demonstration turned ugly tonight," the weekend anchorman said. "A group that calls itself the Good Book Association was holding a rally in Village Square



BOOK

tonight when another group—mostly young people—began taunting them...

"It's not clear who the second group represents. One of the Good Book people said they're a radical offshoot that sometimes uses violence—"

Charles got up in agitation. He started for the door. "I must go there."

"You can't," his wife said.

"That's where the book is and those are book-burners."

"Not here, surely. In other places, maybe, but not here in our village."

"Here's a late report," the television anchorman said. "A fire of some sort has broken out in the square. We have no details on that but an Action News mobile unit is on the way to the scene to bring you live coverage."

Charles ran out the door.

"Please be careful!" Irma called after him as he got into the car.

Books were burning in the square. Dozens were ablaze on the old cobblestones that had been preserved in the open center. More books were being tossed into the flames from cartons people unloaded from a variety of vehicles. The burners were not only young people; they were of many ages. The sidecar of an old motorcycle was filled with books that a helmeted middle-aged woman tossed into the fire one at a time.

Charles reached the square just behind the mobile unit from the television station. He walked around the perimeter of the square. He paused nervously at the secondhand store, stealing only a glance at his book among the others on the table behind the padlocked grill, not wanting to draw attention to this potential tinder.

He wondered how many words remained in the Charles Evans book—how many pages of words had disappeared since he'd last opened it nearly two whole days ago.

Charles saw the camera crew begin shooting as the reporter went around asking questions.

"It was to have been a peaceful protest," an older woman said. "We only wanted to let people know we're concerned about the left-wing propaganda and the other filth that gets printed these days."

Her words were drowned out by a fervent young woman who shouted, "Many brought their books together and burned them before all men. Acts 19:19." She hurled three or four books into the middle of the fire.

A man said, "We're not against

books *per se*. We're reasonable people. But our views have as much right to be taught as those of the neo-humanists."

A boy, apparently drunk, grabbed for the reporter's notepad as if to throw it into the bonfire. "Hey!" the reporter said, then yelled to his cameraman, "Did you get that?"

"No."

The reporter said to the boy, "I dare you to do that again." The boy obliged and the pad went into the flames, live on TV. The reporter took another pad from his pocket.

The bonfire burned fiercely as more cartons of books were dumped into it.

Charles wondered where the police

He tried to grab the book but was thrust aside. It lodged at the top of the fiery pile, its title clearly visible as flames licked at its pages.

and the firefighters were. The TV newsman apparently had wondered too and had an answer. In his stand-up, as the flames danced high behind him, he said, "The book burners are rampaging unchecked here at the moment because in another part of town an explosion and fire at a paint factory have the village's emergency vehicles tied up."

By then a group of young thugs had discovered the secondhand store and the table of books in its barred-off vestibule. With a crowbar they forced open the metal grill and wheeled the table into the square.

Horried, Charles ran toward them. "Please don't take these," he cried. "My book is in there." He could see it clearly, the scarlet binding aglow as it reflected the firelight.

One of the table trundlers grabbed a book from the batch. He called out, "Here's a good one—*The Lessons of Evolution!* We'll give them a lesson, all right." He hurled the big textbook into the flames.

"Down with Darwin!" someone said, giggling.

Charles tried to grab the book with his name on it but he was thrust aside.

Three or four hooligans sped the table and the books on it toward the center of the pyre. Table and all went into the flames.

The Charles Evans book lodged at the top of the fiery pile, its title clearly visible as flames licked at its pages.

It was reported that Charles ran into the fire, apparently in an attempt to retrieve one of the books, and was burned to death before firemen, arriving too late to help, could pull him out.

An old man disputed that report. "I saw the whole thing," he said. "This man stood there horrified. He was whispering, 'My book, my book.' He just stood there, many yards from the fire, and there, as the books burned, he was himself consumed by the flames."

That is what Irma Evans told police she also saw on the live television broadcast, but she was immediately put under a doctor's care. She was heavily sedated and did not speak publicly again.

Others gave conflicting versions of what had been shown on the live newscast. It was a dark, confused scene and the shifting light from the flames threw shadows that made people uncertain that they could trust their memories.

The television tape became evidence after police arrested several people on charges of arson, malicious mischief, suspected involuntary homicide, destruction of public and private property and sundry other violations. The tape was impounded and put for safekeeping in the public prosecutor's office pending trial.

THE WIDOW IS REPORTED RESPONDING TO treatment in the psychiatric wing of the county hospital. Her condition is stable.

At the shop where someone had allegedly purchased a book entitled *Charles Evans*, the bookseller discovered that the credit card company, after long delay, had disallowed the charge slip, stamping it: "No such account. Customer unknown."

After nearly a year, when the prosecuting attorney took the six-minute tape from his safe to review it, he found that fifty-four seconds were missing from the beginning of the tape and that seventy-seven seconds were missing at the end. Because no transcript had been made at the time of confiscation, the prosecutor directed that one be typed. When that was done, the following week, the amount of missing material had increased from one hundred thirty-one seconds to one hundred eighty-three. The prosecutor's office investigated to learn how those three minutes and three seconds could have vanished. No one thought just then to see if the typewritten transcript was also shrinking. ■

OTHER DIMENSIONS

ATTACK OF THE CYBERBABIES?

In these days of artificial insemination, test-tube babies, surrogate motherhood, cloning, and genetic engineering, new "high-tech" parenting ideas hardly raise an eyebrow—let alone goose bumps. But they certainly do raise some interesting questions....

THE G FACTOR

Parents (or would-be parents), do you have a yen for a baby girl? If so, geneticist Bert Little of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas might have a solution to your quest. He can at least increase your odds—that is, provided the would-be dad is a tactical pilot or astronaut. It seems that men who are regularly exposed to high G forces (G force is the "pull" which pins an accelerating pilot to his seat) are more likely to conceive daughters than sons.

In a comparison between pilots and astronauts who experienced high G forces and those who didn't, Little found a significantly higher ratio of girls born to the high-G fathers.

Little points out that high Gs cause pilots to burn up more energy; the increased metabolism might make it more difficult for smaller Y "male" sperm to reach the egg for fertilization. In addition to this energy-burning theory, he has also suggested other high-altitude hazards—including ionizing radiation and oxygen deprivation—which might play a part in the high number of pink-ribboned cigars passed out by high-G dads.

This "Frequent-Flyers-Father-Females" factor isn't permanent, however. Little states, "If a pilot isn't exposed to G forces for about

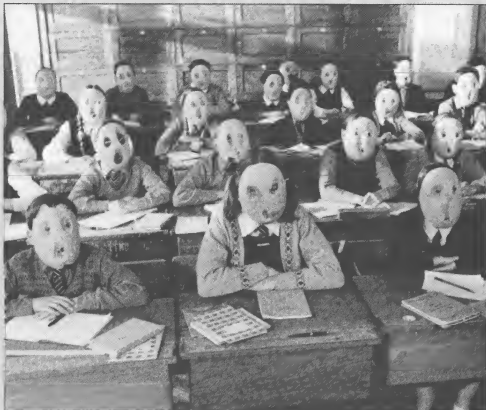


PHOTO © 1982 NBM/UA

ninety days, then his probability of having a girl drops back down to fifty-fifty."

As far as we know, no research has been done about possible effects caused by the increased velocity of the stork as it delivers the baby....

—A.R. Morlan

TUBE-TOTS

A \$19.95 baby? No, she isn't the offspring of The Six Million Dollar Man and his Bionic Woman. She's merely the latest arrival at Creative Programming, Inc., 30 East 60th Street, NY, NY, who have previously dispelled the loneliness of VCR owners with the ever-obedient Video Dog and the cuddly Video Cat.

Not unlike a certain vegetable-named doll, Video Baby

comes with a birth certificate (parents may name her what they wish), a child guidance booklet, and a medical record sheet of her own.

Video Baby is, according to Peter Wild (co-creator of C.P., Inc., along with his wife Nancy Fischer), "cute, electronically healthy" and can be used as "a great wedding gift or Mother's Day gift, or even as a way for a mother to encourage her children to give her grandchildren. A sort of 'the first one's on me' gift."

So, just what does this thirteen-minute-long (VHS only) bundle of joy do? At her new parent's command, she will either "Smile for Mommy" or "Come to Daddy." Better yet, she never needs diapering or cleaning. (In fact, bathing *this* baby

could be fatal!)

The proud parents can take her on a stroller ride to the park or feed her (household electrical current will do nicely), without having to bother with the real-baby worries of finding the right baby-sitter, running out of diapers, or losing so much as one night's sleep. When Mommy and Daddy want a little peace and quiet, all they have to do is press "Eject" and put Video Baby on the shelf until they get another parenting urge.

So, for those of you who never had kids, you no longer have any excuses. All you need to make *this* baby is a VCR, a TV, and about twenty bucks. Perhaps having a sense of the absurd would help as well.

—A.R. Morlan

Each of us has a secret wish we keep inside,
one thing we desire above all others.
Thomas Marne was one of those to whom
that one wish was granted. But for every
gift, there is a price . . .

HEART'S DESIRE

JAMES KILLUS

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HUNT

Let me tell you about Thomas Marne, who was my friend.

Thomas and I both worked for a company with offices in one of those glass-curtained monsters that seem to be the pride of urban real estate. I was there for many months before I even knew he existed. He had some sort of computerized bookkeeping job that brought him scant contact with others, but that was not the whole of it. He had a quality of invisibility about him, a sense of shyness and reserve that did not provoke curiosity. Thinking back, I believe that I had subconsciously dubbed him "old sotto voce," and with that labeling he dropped from my awareness.

But slowly it began to intrude upon me that there was wit to him. I remember a time when someone (perhaps it was me) looked out the window at a neon pink sunset and said, "Nice skies."

"Finish last," said Thomas, and I remember a little jolt that came from it. A quick reply, and suddenly the unnoticable intruded, as if a potted plant had cracked a joke. And I chided myself. I have complained so often about how modern life tends to reduce people to ciphers, how people dehumanize their fellows, and here I had been guilty of it myself.

So I became curious. I watched for him at lunch, stood next to him in the cafeteria line, and was rewarded by hearing him ask the counter woman if they had those new designer cereals by Halston-Purina. I chuckled and Thomas smiled in response. The counter lady was just puzzled.

Much of this is sheer ego, you understand. I admit to it. Here we had a shy gem of a human being whose presense went unnoticed save by me, the oh-so perceptive one. Yes. I confess to the sin of pride. And perhaps as a result, I continued to underestimate him.

One lunchtime I kidnapped Thomas and took him to a nearby art museum. I was going to broaden his horizons, you see. Instead he treated me to a forty-five-minute lecture on the finer points of the exhibit (California Surrealists) including a brief soliloquy on an empty room, recently repainted, which he filled with an imaginary collection of bizarre pieces, including a "toilet with teeth and a copy of the Florentine 'Boy Urinating' combined with a weather vane so that the child is always pissing into the wind."



DESIRE

So that was Thomas. Tall and shy with a bit of the teddy bear to him. He seldom spoke, but when he did, there was a sardonic undertone to his speech that I found interesting. I think most people merely found it a bit disturbing. I determined to make him my friend.

So I worked on him. We lunched together regularly. I commandeered him for odd impulsive evenings of recreation: roller skating, fireworks, miniature golf. Our tastes in movies were similar, our tastes in theater diverged. I like musicals, you see.

He balked when I tried to take him to musical events. Any kind of musical event. Apart from the musicals, I mentioned an Indian dance ensemble and he feigned disinterest. I suggested a symphony and he claimed to be tone deaf. Once I offered to take him to a guitar recital and I think that I saw a flash of fear in his eyes.

I eventually decided that a frontal attack was best. One day, near quitting time, I went to his office and said, "Get your coat. We are going to dinner and then to a club. The club features New Wave and Punk. It is loud, rhythmic, and you can dance to it. I have cotton for your ears in case of sonic attack."

He looked at me and realized that he could not invent an excuse fast enough

to squirm free. He sighed and asked, "Why did the punk cross the road?"

"I don't know. Why did the punk cross the road?"

"Because he was stapled to a chicken."

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC BEGAN ITS LIFE AS The Hullabaloo in the mid-sixties, then became the Incandescent Apricot, then Dance, Dance, Dance, and the Cisco Disco, in roughly that order. When New Wave went out of fashion, the building no doubt housed the Urbane Cowboy, or whatever else swung into style. I never found out.

As the Weimar it strove for a black leather-and-chrome decadence, featuring bands like Los Microwaves, and Technectium-99. The atmosphere might have seemed more authentic were more of its clientele of legal drinking age. It is hard to credit the world-weariness of a sixteen-year-old, although I'm sure that teenage alienation seems real from the inside. I cared little for such sociological cawwawing, however. I had come to dance.

Thomas seemed to enjoy himself, though he drank a great deal, which was unusual for him. I had to help him to the car and drive him home afterwards. But he did not get sick. He always kept himself firmly gripped.

His home was a little bungalow stuck between two motels in a particularly ugly example of urban sprawl. The cottage sat behind thick rows of

hedges; once into the yard, you could barely hear the street-noise. I helped Thomas up the front steps and through the front door, though he could have made it on his own. I had never seen the inside of his house before. Maybe I'd known him long enough—or tonight he was drunk enough—for him to trust me.

So we pushed inside and he flipped the light switch. And my jaw dropped.

The entire place was decorated with musical instruments. There were guitars and dulcimers on the walls and a psalter in the corner beside the piano. A concertina resided on a bookshelf next to a rack of harmonicas. Every level surface had a recorder or a pennywhistle or a flute. The entire place was like a music store gone domestic.

"Oh, my," I said stupidly. "Do you play all these?"

Thomas flopped down on the couch and rubbed his eyes. "Yes," he said, and paused.

"No," he said. Another pause.

"I don't know," he said.

He opened his eyes and stared at me. We said nothing for nearly a minute. Finally the tumblers clicked and he made a decision.

"Okay," he said. "I'm going to tell you a story. When I'm done you'll think I'm crazy and I'm not sure that's wrong. Well see."

And this is the story that he told:

I USED TO BE IN A ROCK BAND, THOMAS SAID. That was about ten or fifteen years ago. We were a middling band of the heavy space-music variety, lots of bass and organ, heavy on the reverb, that sort of thing. I played second lead guitar and keyboard. Cojo played first lead and rhythm, Dumbo was on drums, and Killer, who was black, played bass. I was the only one who had no nickname. I was just Tom.

It was a high time; those were high times for everyone. Lots of action. We never got a record contract, but we did put out a single once, on an obscure label you've never heard of. And we gigged pretty regularly. We once even toured the midwest with Iron Butterfly. They were big in Kansas.

Cojo dealt drugs besides being in the band, and he had some other hustles too complicated to describe. There was always a cloud of "chickies" around—sorry, but that's what we called them—and they did flutter a lot. Wine, women, and song; dope, sex, and rock and roll. It was a good way to burn out a lapsed Catholic adolescence, hey?

So it couldn't last, but I probably wouldn't have cared if you'd told me that. "No tomorrows" was the watch-

PROFILE:

JAMES KILLUS



"I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1950," writes Jim Killus, "and graduated high school a few miles from what is now Opryland, U.S.A. I went to college at Rens-

selaer Polytechnic Institute in upstate New York, got a Masters degree in Engineering Science, and moved to California because I never wanted to touch snow again.

"My 'day job' is in atmospheric science. I am middling-well known in the field of atmospheric photochemistry (the science of smog formation). A few years ago (due to a long illness that left me unable to work full time for a couple of years), I made the jump to independent consultant, so now I'm Freelance Everything.

"I've published two novels, *Book of Shadows* and *SunSmoke*, both from Ace Books, the latter being the world's first and probably forever-only computer voodoo smog simulation science fantasy novel. I'm at work on a new novel tentatively titled *The Wolves of Manhattan*, which takes place in 1911 and involves Bat Masterson during the days when he was a sports journalist for the *New York Morning Telegraph*."

word at our end of the street.

Somewhere near the beginning of the end, Cojo took up with this chick named Joella. Joella was *strange*. She came from San Francisco and that added to the image, as if she needed it, which she didn't. Her speech was a mixture of Zen, occult, and Jungian psychobabble that slid right by me. She baffled everybody, except maybe Cojo, but who knew about him? All I could tell was that there was something in her head besides tapioca. She was no ordinary space case.

And physically she was really something to behold. Long black hair with a white streak. The grace of a cat. A body to make you hyperventilate. Someone told me that she'd made some porn films once, but I never saw them. I wish I had.

She and Cojo took to throwing parties. Or séances. Or sabbats. Something like that. They usually ended up as an orgy of some sort, so they held my interest. And the drugs were pretty spectacular, too.

The last bash that I went to was when the...when the *thing* happened.

Joella and Cojo had been doing tantric yoga all day and I don't remember about him but she was like fireworks. She practically glowed. You got the feeling that you could burn your fingers on her. And she was absolutely dominating. We did all the preparation rituals without a single complaint, and some of them were pretty degrading.

Then we sat in a circle, hands crossed and waited for the drugs to come on. Cojo had dosed us three or four times in some kind of calculated sequence, or at least it gave that impression. I'm pretty sure there was belladonna in it and some psilocybin, too. Nightshade and magic mushrooms it would have been; everything was so organic in those days. Cojo had a fondness for jimsonweed too, so maybe he included some of that.

While the rushes came we meditated on the object that Joella had carved: some sort of abstract with a lot of jagged edges slicing through smooth curves. We were supposed to all see it from different angles, forming a communal three-dimensional mandala, so spake Joella. For background sound there were three separate tapes playing. One was some wolf howls from a Smithsonian recording. One was wind harp sounds. The last was classical Spanish guitar. They blended pretty well, considering.

For some reason I got into the meditation more than I ever had before.

Well, it was pretty hard to do anything else, what with the drugs we'd taken. I just watched the thing in the center of the room and sort of switched off.

After I don't know how long, the music started slowing down. I may have thought that something was happening to the electricity, but I might not have thought anything.

And then the thing in the center started squirming or crawling—like my eyes were wrapping around it so that I could see all sides at the same time.

Then the music stopped completely, and everything went white.

I was still switched off. Fearless. With that much of a drug dose, you



stay calm about everything or it can be trouble. I was a pretty sophisticated drug user, so I stayed calm.

Then someone said, "You can have anything you want so long as it makes no difference."

I said, "What?" When no answer came I said, "Who are you?" My voice sounded thin and reedy. Maybe I was only imagining that I spoke aloud.

The voice said, "My identity is a matter of circumstance and mood. For what do you hold the most and the least belief? Do you believe in angels and devils? Alien visitors or fairies? Do you worship elementals or archetypes? Are you religious? I am Satan, Mephistopheles, and Beelzebub, the unholy trinity. Does that help? Are you a positivist? Then the labels make no difference. A phenomenologist? I am a phenomenon of interest to you because I possess certain powers."

"Which are...?"

"I have the power to grant you your heart's desire. I can give you anything you want, so long as it makes no difference."

"For my soul in exchange?" I asked, remembering the Satan part.

"The concept of bartering one's soul is bourgeois and egotistical. It is also incorrect. It presumes that one's soul has market value. Why should it? The soul has no more value than it has weight. The soul is process; one cannot barter process."

"So what do you want from me?" I asked.

"I want to give you whatever you want so long as it makes no difference."

"You keep saying that," I said. "What does it mean?"

"Ah," said the voice. "At last we come to the terms. It means that my deal is with you and you alone. No one else may benefit. No one else may be affected directly. If you want money you may have it but you may not spend it."

"What good is that?"

"What good is money to a miser? Yet they seem to want it anyway."

I thought about that for a moment.

He continued, "You may have sex with anyone you desire, so long as no one knows it, not even the receptacle. This can be accomplished in many ways. The receptacle may be unconscious or dead. Or the other could simply forget immediately afterward."

"Fame is very difficult and is fortunately seldom requested, given the price. You may receive fame during your lifetime, but all trace and memory dies with you."

It was time for me to ask an obvious question, "So what do you get out of this?"

"An action and its consequences are the same phenomenon. The gift rewards the giver."

"Why are you a devil, then? What's the catch? What kind of trick are you pulling?"

"No one will ever know but you. You have but to ask your boon."

Afterwards I might rationalize the decision, but at the time I was not thinking straight. Hell, I was having a conversation with an hallucination. Either that or the Devil himself. Or someone even less truthful. But I knew what I wanted.

"I'm a musician," I said. "A mediocre one. Give me talent."

"Talent!" the voice exclaimed. "I give you genius!"

Then suddenly everything went black and the music started up again. But I was holding a guitar and it was my hands playing the music. I could feel the sound flowing from the guitar into my hands, along with a feeling of strength and sensitivity and suppleteness. It was like an orgasm—no, better than that. It was *ecstasy*.

DESIRE

Then I blacked out completely.

I came to the next afternoon, sprawled on the floor along with everyone else. The room looked like an aftermath, people lying every which way, some dressed, some not. There were several weird smells in the air and damp stains on the floor. Somebody groaned and rolled over and said, "I hate to mention it, but we have a gig tonight." Maybe it was me who said it.

We got our equipment together and drove our van down to the club where we were supposed to play. We were all pretty spaced out, if not to say completely brain-burned. I did my share of the work in a semiconscious fog, not really thinking about the gig or the night before or the strange dreams I'd had. But my hands felt funny. I remember that. My hands felt funny.

We were the opener that night. We got to the club, set up, and started the sound check. A few hard-core music junkies had already filtered in and they were taking up positions to make sure they had good seats for the headlines. I've forgotten who the main band was that night. I didn't get a chance to hear them.

As I said, I was stumbling around trying to get ready. This sort of thing was pretty common, especially on the road. Just before we started our gig, Cojo would usually come up with some coke or crystal meth, so we'd peak during the show. Until then we were just stumbling around.

I strapped on my guitar and plugged it in, but there was still no power to my amp. I called to our manager to fix it, then I went over to the organ and struck a chord.

The sound went through the club and a shiver went up my spine. I got that same ecstatic feeling in my hand that I'd felt the previous night in my drug dream. Like I'd dipped my hand in power. Suddenly I knew that I could play anything, anything at all. My head crowded with riffs and melodies that I'd never heard before. It was the ecstasy again.

Then it hit me.

There were people out there.

With that realization the ecstasy vanished, replaced by waves of nausea and a feeling like I'd been punched in the stomach. I got the cold sweats and I began to shake with the worst case of stage fright I'd ever had. Worst I'd ever had? Worst I'd ever heard of! Worse than I could imagine! I bolted from the stage, nearly destroying my guitar as I

tried to unstrap it while I ran. I barely made it to the men's room before I threw up.

While I was heaving into the toilet somebody came in to check on me. I think it was Killer. "You okay?" he asked.

"I can't play tonight," I said. "Too sick. Came on sudden."

"Maybe Cojo has something..." he began.

"No way," I said and started to leave again.

"Well, we'll cover somehow," he said, obviously a bit pissed. "Catch you later." Then he left.

After a while I heard the music

I could hear every note, pristine and crystalline. I stood there, unable to move, unable to do anything that might interrupt that golden song.

start up. I was still shaky, but I found I could navigate. Somebody offered to drive me home. There was no reason for me to stay, so I split.

The house where we all lived was deserted. I wandered around a bit, smoked a joint, had a bite to eat. I put off doing what I knew I had to do as long as I could. There was a guitar up in my room. No one around. No reason for stage fright. Finally I couldn't stand it anymore. I went up to my room and picked up my guitar.

It was just like in the dream. Like holding beautiful, cool fire. The music just flowed. I played everything I had ever played, then started in on the stuff that I'd never been good enough to play. Well, I was good enough now. It was terrifying, to hear the music come unbidden into my head and then to flow out my hands into the guitar. And knowing—knowing!—that if I heard anyone coming, if anyone at all could hear, then my hands would begin to shake and I'd get so scared that I would throw up.

I could have anything at all, so long as it made no difference. I'd asked for music and it was mine. But I was the only one who could hear it. . . .

THOMAS STOPPED AND WAITED. HE looked around the room at all the instruments. Then he looked at me and said, "I left the house before anyone came back, just packed and split. I never told anyone why, didn't even leave a note. Just another dropout from the dropouts. I've never told anyone about it until tonight."

I looked at Thomas for a while, not knowing what to say. He stared back at me. He had been right. I did think that he was crazy. Not bad crazy, just one of those poor souls who had burned out some part of themselves with too many drugs and too much weird living. But I couldn't tell him that. And I couldn't think of anything more tactful to say. Anything I said would sound like a lie. So the silence grew.

He got up abruptly and walked over to the wall where a guitar hung. He yanked it down and returned to his seat. His face was white and he was biting his lip as he checked the tuning.

It was watching torture. He swallowed periodically and his hands shook as he pantomimed a chord. He closed his eyes and clutched the instrument, trembling, trying not to cry.

"I can't," he said at last, raw despair showing on his face. "I can't. Not even just once. Not even for you."

I wanted to comfort him but I didn't know how. He seemed so shrunken and helpless and I felt so awkward and clumsy. I opened my mouth to say something but not even inanities would come.

"You should leave now," he said. "There's nothing you can do. It's all right. I don't blame you. It's a pretty incredible story I tell." His face was expressionless.

We said our clumsy good-byes and I left.

ON MY WAY TO THE CAR I CURSED MYSELF as nine kinds of fool. He was my friend! That is supposed to count for something. I shouldn't just cut and run. So what if he told me a story too loopy to believe? I didn't have to actively disbelieve. I could have suspended judgment—there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, blah-blah-blah.

What it came down to was that if I could not think of anything to say to his tears, I should have embraced him and cried along with him. That is what friends are for.

So I sat there with my hand on the ignition and instead of starting up and driving away, I pulled out the key and got out of the car. I didn't know what I was going to say, but that didn't matter. I was determined to do right by my friend.

Which is to say that I had good intentions.

You know where good intentions lead.

I was on his front steps when I heard the music.

I could hear every note, pristine and crystalline even through the intervening door. The beauty of it transfixed me. I stood there unable to move, unable to knock upon the door, unable to do anything that might interrupt that golden song.

At first I tried to believe that it was a recording that I heard, but the thought did not bear scrutiny. I had seen no stereo equipment within Thomas's dwelling, only musical instruments. All was for sound production, not reproduction. And I was doubly sure that this music had never been recorded. Had it been, the world would have knelt at the artist's feet. I do not engage in hyperbole. The music that came from within the home of Thomas Marne was unmistakably the work of genius.

In the song I heard joy and sorrow, love and hatred, desire, revulsion, pain and ecstasy. All the dichotomies of life, all emotion, all moods, all aspirations, all defeats, all echoed wordlessly in that music. Yet, the transitions were smooth as poetry, the contrasts sharp as broken glass. The music was as life itself.

But I misspeak. I said that all emotions were in that song. That is not true, for there was a missing element.

There was no hope to it. None at all. The song of Thomas Marne was utterly without hope. For all its joy and ecstasy, its hopelessness frightened me.

I could not bring myself to knock upon the door and thereby end the beauty, but neither could I bear to remain. The music had drenched me and chilled me and set my teeth to chattering. At length, completely saturated with the sound of it, I turned and fled back to my car where I sat shivering in the dark for a long time before I felt able to drive home.

The music followed me when I left. You cannot believe how long the music followed me.

I DID NOT SLEEP THAT NIGHT; I COULD NOT sleep. The music played too loud in my head and certain questions haunted me. For the bargain which was not a bargain had a principle and that principle was "anything you want so long as it makes no difference." But how was it that I was allowed to hear it? And why was I allowed to hear it?

The answer to the first question completes the story of Thomas Marne. On an anonymous tip, the police went

to his home the next day and found him dead, slumped over his guitar. I identified the body. As if I needed yet another image branded into my memory, I still can see the look upon his death-fixed face.

So that is the answer to the first question. It made no difference that I heard—to Thomas.

And I think that is the seed of the answer to the second question. Why was I allowed to hear? Why was it given to me to hear?

I walk the street and from an open window comes the sound of music played on the radio. But the music that I hear is different from that which reaches others' ears. For I hear it both as it is and also as Thomas might have played it. The sound of his guitar comes to me in every whistled tune, every birdsong and bell peal, every wind chime and waterfall that I hear.

Think of Thomas Marne, the most brilliant musician of our age, unable to share his gift, unable to tell his story even to a friend without being thought lunatic. Such loneliness he must have felt. Such helplessness, such hopelessness.

Is that not the rot that prepares a soul for hell?

An action and its consequences are the same phenomenon. The gift rewards the giver. I tried to give a lifeline to my drowning friend. It turned out to be the weight that dragged him down. That and the gift of Another, who has been paid, but who wants still more. And so another "gift" has been bestowed.

I know the song of Thomas Marne. I hear it constantly. I, who cannot even fumble out a tune upon a pennywhistle, I have been given the music of the spheres. And I am no more able to share this burden than was Thomas Marne.

How many poets' souls perished in the burning of Alexandria? How many sculptors' hearts were smashed with the icons in the Reformation? How many blind painters are born? How many lame dancers? How many Beethovens are deaf at birth? How many novels of genius molder in attics, how many paintings are painted with sand? How many burdens go unshared?

You cannot say. You think that this is just a story that I tell. For you it is just a story. But I know.

For me, my knowledge is a rot upon my soul, a rot that grows to engulf me. I know the truth in the song of Thomas Marne. I know my soul is lost to me, lost in a pact I never made. Unfair, but where is mercy save in dreams?

Some day I may hear the voice that Thomas heard, make the choice he made. Or not. It does not matter. It does not matter how I choose. The deal was struck too long ago, the bargain and payment in a single breath. And if you hear the words I speak, if they are real to you, then my fate awaits you as well. It is knowledge that dooms us, is it not? We have the word of the Christian God in this, or so the Bible says, and few other creeds disagree.

My fate is sealed and I am lost. My soul is not my own. I have heard the song that Orpheus sang, which none but the damned may hear. ■



brink-hovering way that comes from overwork, plus seeing the kitchen help pour dishwasher scotch into Chivas jugs. He sat down. Tonight, he just did not have the energy to do it...

ALEA SHIFTED IN HIS GRASP WITH A GROAN, twisting halfway around in the bed. He held the palm of her hand to his lips. Kissed. The hand caressed his face, dropped to his chest, and snaked the rest of the way down. He stiffened instantly at her touch.

...AND SO HE STARED SOURLY INTO HIS glass. No answers there. He abandoned it on the low brick wall without sipping further. Letting the faraway light defocus before him was more comforting.

Nobody introduced her. She was just there.

"Drink this."

He looked up at her voice but did not really see her. He passively accepted a delicate glass of what looked like sauterne, because it was extended toward him.

Oh Christ, I've been made. He could not keep the hostile resignation from his voice. "Start anytime, honey." He tossed a mocking toast in her direction with the wineglass.

"No. You're wrong." She let silence hang for a few moments. Peter was surprised that she did not launch immediately into a spiel. She sat near him on the brick wall, and watched him, until he spoke.

"You'll forgive my vast repertoire of social gaffes," he said gruffly, not caring if she did. He still had not seen her. He kept his eyes on the tree line below the patio. "I am engaged in the only pastimes that give me any pleasure right now. That is to say, getting squiffed and pissing on total strangers."

Another pause of what could have been a minute. Then: "Self-pity is a deadly kind of luxury. You're slopping it all over the place. It's coming off you in waves, you know."

"Mm. I'm overdoing it. It's like all the dope in town—not what it's cracked up to be." The yellow wine was crisp, and very cold, and not a sauterne at all. Peter's palate was at a loss for identification.

"You can talk," she encouraged.

He thought he also heard *you've been wanting to talk for a long time*, but it did not come out of her mouth. The comeback that shot up from his mental shuck file ran: *Oh, a hooker psychiatrist; that's a new twist, you should pardon the pun.* His gut cancelled it. The back of his throat sudden-

"Sometimes," said Alea, "you act as though you're waiting for me to get to the part where I finally reveal just what I want from you."

ly ached with the need to put the payload of acid in his mind somewhere else. She was a stranger. She had asked for it. If shit got on her when it erupted it was her own damned fault. That's what it came down to: emotional vomit.

The wineglass was in his hands. He gazed at some infinity point beyond, in the darkness. He spoke not to the woman but to her voice. He was stark sober now, and his own voice was a deadly monotone. The forces etching his life emerged with a succinct kind of violence, like the confession of an utterly relaxed serial killer: *You see I thought the solution to all my problems was to use myself up faster and when that failed I decided a slow lingering death was better than a short, sharp shock, and so commenced the erosion that kills everyone here, when your sanity dribbles away a dram at a time until you're empty, babe, you can't get a hard-on at thirty-five, or groceries without three pieces of photo ID, and the traffic cops aren't kidding when they pull you over, and the stench of petrochemicals and madness permeates your clothes, and you have to keep your fingernails manicure-clean because otherwise you'll see the dead tissue hiding there, the residue of all the faceless people you fucked over to get ahead, and you think of all the claws that have your blood dried beneath them, and you dwell on this psychotic paranoid craziness until everything, even the ragpickers and shopping-cart ladies haunting the Boulevard, reminds you of how berserk this lunatic hostel is, they call this living, and your brain builds its own padded cell, hurling up high walls to trap you inside and keep you apart from the predators who suck at your life, your needs, until you become a*

brain-dead paycheck junkie, until you can't care anymore, until you spend an entire year in court because your soon-to-be ex-wife wants to impress her new sex toy, the attorney, until you gladly grind out bilge designed to anesthetize hausfraus and their blue-collar hobbies out there in Television Land, until you walk like a robot to stupid social jousts like this one, slopping on a death-mask grin for the neo-bohos and airheads and thrill addicts and people who've become walking ghosts, dead without realizing it, because...

Because.

She finished for him once he was tapped out. "Because you can't run anywhere else. Because with all the options available to someone like you, there is still no place to run. Except in circles."

"Social circles," he said with a bitter little smile.

She brought him another glass of yellow wine. A very peculiar sort of buzz was coming on; he felt weak, drained, yet purged and somehow more clearheaded than before. He was suddenly in debt to this woman he had not acknowledged with his eyes. He was embarrassed. With Kathryn, he could never find words like these, or get past his chagrin at actually voicing them. It wasn't part of the deal, the contract. If you ever talked of such things, the razors came out. People rolled their eyes and pointed and never caught wind; before you knew it you were shunned, ostracized, worse than dead.

When he accepted the second glass, he looked up and began, a trifle too offhandedly, "Look, uh...I usually don't..."

He saw her, for the first time truly saw her, and his heart and stomach seemed to swap positions with a *thud*.

"Don't apologize," she said. "Don't back off. You've just been as honest with yourself as you have with me. How does it feel? Better than pity?"

His head swam. Had all the booze slid home at once? With a silly kind of awe he asked, "Are you a—what do they call it?—an empath?"

"No." Even her voice was hypnotic.

Peter's arm still hung in midair, holding the glass. She was so...

"My name is Alea. Now you relax and I'll talk awhile."

Peter always remembered that, too.

BOTH BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE LAY DEAD ON the floor, the two fingerprinted glasses shot down alongside them. Alea did not awaken so much as trade some of her sleepiness for some of Peter's consciousness. This time it was she who imprisoned him in her arms and legs,

grinding with an almost desperate fervor. A wholly unanticipated orgasm picked him up and shook him. She could bring him back as many times as she wanted. And as they fell exhaustedly horizontal, she spoke to him in that low and musical whisper his mind knew so well.

"Welcome home."

In a sense Peter was the one who had gone away. It did not need to be said.

THAT WAS HOW IT ALL BECAME, OR RATHER, resumed. Over the next two weeks Peter Deutsch gradually realized that the alien landscape he explored with Alea was a place he had heard so much propaganda about in his lifetime. He'd thought it a myth and never taken it seriously. Myths were inapplicable to his life. Like clichés.

"Love? I haven't the dimmest notion of what love is," he told her. "Everybody talks about it but nobody does anything...."

"You're wrong. You know a lot about it."

"Yes?"

"You know what it's not, from experience." Her eyes were a tawny fulvous color, with black-ringed irises shot through with mellow flecks of amber, much like the aptly-named tigereye. They always met his directly. "From what I've seen, you've got a good grasp of the theory."

"What are you talking about?" He shook his head with a little-boy grin. Twice he had tried to defuse the subject by being funny; twice she had deflected him.

"You love rather than saying you love. Beware of people who need to hear the words all the time. You love me with your speech, with the things you do, with the way your eyes love me, all the time. You make love to me even when you're not making love to me."

"Gee, thanks. Subtlety was always my strong suit." He felt a faint irritation at being so obviously exposed. But it was true—he thought about her while working, while driving, upon waking, constantly, pleasantly...perhaps a bit obsessively?

Certainly some possessiveness might be permitted in his case, if he kept it to himself. She was fascinatingly enigmatic. She told him things about himself that were unnerving because they were so dead-on and cut around so much sweet, meaningless badinage. A misty-eyed portrait she was not. Yet she could exude vulnerability while remaining aloof; she could be direct and artfully ethereal at the same time. Sometimes her sheer control made him feel like an unruly adolescent. It was not so much

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his ineptitude as her mystique—as though she was capable of instructing her pheromones specifically where to go, and what to do.

Alea, simply, seemed more comfortable with the idea of love. Peter had always considered it beyond his reach, *de facto*...which was how their conversation had drifted around to it in the first place.

Kathryn had dismissed Peter as a man whose need for a psychological aspirin could always be solved by a bed-slammng, blindingly good fuck. Damon, on the other hand, had always suspected there might be room in Peter's life for another human being. But after Damon had met Kathryn, he decided that capacity for friendship would never get a chance to emerge. Or escape.

Friends never actually understood,

thought Peter. If they did, they could not help. If they did help, they could only go so far—never far enough. Before, he would have felt stupid attempting to explain to Damon how someone like Alea could draw the will to love back out of its dungeon. Now he thought that he should at least try to explain it to his friend, because he felt sure it *had* happened. The old Peter, the one putting at the party, would not have even tried.

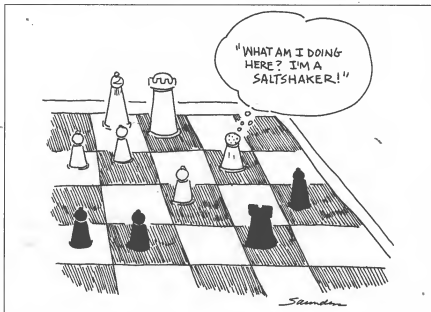
HE HAD DONE HER FEET AND SHOULDERS; now she was doing his. "So—is caring so inadmissible in your life?"

His knotted muscles loosened up under her strong, steady fingers. "No. Just infrequent, that's all. You can't be good at something you've only tried once."

"Sometimes, Peter, you act as though you're waiting for me to get to the part where I finally reveal just what it is I want from you. The hidden agenda that will permit you to revert to your old walled-in self and justify fire-bombing another relationship...because nobody will ever truly be good enough for you."

He shifted, suddenly uncomfortable, revealed again. "Wow, I'm sorry if I gave you that—"

"I know, I know," she overrode. "Let me finish. I want you to know something. You are good, Mister Deutsch—very good. At everything you apply yourself to. You stimulate me intellectually, excite me physically, please me generally, and—" she picked at her words, trying for meaning and hitting a difficult patch "—and sometimes I worry that there will come a time when I fail to keep up with you. You're what I want. You're what I think I need in my life. I have freedom and I can count on you if I



need stability. Don't sell yourself short. You've fooled yourself into believing that I have no problems or worries and that I'm the rock you can hang onto. You need a great deal of attention and devotion... but that's okay, you deserve it. You deserve everything good in the world, and I want to be everything I can for you. But don't ever think that what you and I have makes one of us superior, especially not me. If you're leaning on me, understand that it's mutual. As long as we both lean against each other, neither one of us will fall down and go boom."

She tilted his head back, and he saw the imploring expression on her face, a shade of their future together, and it squeezed his heart. She was not invulnerable either. She had been hurt too, sometime far back. It showed in the way her hands stopped stroking him, in the shininess of her eyes as she spoke.

All his previous desire for her was outshone by the way he wanted her now. And thought he needed her.

"Oh yeah. One more thing. I love you, too."

It was a word he still tripped over. If he had run across the word joyous in a screenplay, he would have sneered at it. Now it described precisely how he felt. He was hooked. Joyously hooked. You could never anticipate the snare that would get you. That was *how* it got you.

"You can't know how long this has taken me," he said in a diminished voice, thinking perhaps she had known all along. The moment was gem-perfect between them. It radiated. Another night lay ahead, and another beyond that....

He felt content at last. Another silly word to pin down the warmth inside him, too long absent.

The next time Peter saw Alea, she was enthusiastically fucking someone else—or some thing else, since it probably was not even human.

"I LOVE YOU! WHY DO YOU TREAT ME IN this abusive way?"

The little man's bulb nose was red. After slamming the door to his office he slapped his thick-coated arms vigorously, doing a dance in place.

"God! *Pueblo de Nuestra Señora Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula!* My darling City of the Angels, my goddess, tell me why you are so unseasonably cold this time of year!" He doffed a gray stovepipe hat whose crown was canted forward with age and abuse and unwound himself from a thick crocheted muffler. "Humph! No answers, as usual. Only, subzero torment!"

A response issued from the dark-

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ness behind the big desk. "Indian winter. Who can say?"

The voice was not warm, either. It was a reedy buzz from a crooked-lipped mouth that hated to squander, in speech, time better spent drinking. It pronounced words off-center, with an accent. A stranger might be left with the impression that a huge French cockroach had journeyed far just to scare the little man by addressing him from behind his own desk. But the little man's startlement was momentary.

"Very funny, Maurice." He tossed his hat toward the tarnished rack. He never missed. The visitor flinched, anticipating something heavy and deadly.

"*Wah!*" The dwarf's feet flashed in the air as the top-heavy desk, chair upended and dumped him on his butt. Moths fled toward the ceiling and jostled paper floated like big cartoon snowflakes.

The little man never let the dwarf see the hint of a leprechaun smile on his face. He had to keep a tone of disdain in his voice. "You know, Maurice, it annoys me beyond mere words when you burgle your way into my office. My office is my sanctuary, my cathedral... and here you are, using the font for your *toilette*." He tugged off thin gloves a finger at a time.

The dwarf, in the light now, shook his head and walked around the desk with his peculiar rolling gait. His head barely cleared the desktop. He lifted a stack of ancient manila file folders from the seat of a bar stool that rose from the chaos, placed it on the floor, clapped his hands of dust, and scampered aboard. "Sorry," was all he said.

The little man sniffed. "I did ask you not to, your know."

"But... Monsieur Rogoff... I..."

"Yes, yes." The little man waved a dismissive hand and used his muffler to rub his nose back to warmth. "You wish to impress me with your stealth and expertise in all things. Fine, good. I am suitably dazzled. I would not summon you at all if I lacked for faith in your multifarious talents, yes?" No need to stroke the dwarf's ego more than necessary, he thought. His brow wrinkled. "And should you do it one more time, I shall find myself forced to engage equivalent talents elsewhere, yes!" It hung in the air. The dwarf was silent. The little man took this as an acceptance of terms, and terminated the topic by saying, "Ah. Good."

The dwarf sanded his stubby sculptor's hands against each other. "To the task at hand, then?"

"Mm. Yes. Once more into the breach, and all that, yes? But on the way over here, Maurice, I was thinking... a few changes, a few variations on the normal theme. This time I want something for myself. On this case, we get a little extra, I think."

It was clear to the dwarf that his employer was still doping out what his intended deviations from the norm might be. This was stimulating; almost as good as a full flask of cognac. "There is danger, perhaps?" he said, eyes aglint.

"No. As a matter of fact, I want spice, not salt."

"But... improvements on your classic procedure, Monsieur?" The dwarf checked the grandfather clock. A lot of theoretical time had been lost. The clock was always wrong. So they had never possessed the time to lose in the first place. To Maurice, if it was ten past anything, he deemed himself late for his metronomically recurrent cocktail hour.

"Improvements? No." The little man picked out a careful pathway toward his desk and draped the muffler beside the hat. "As I said—seasoning. A good cut of meat is delicious without seasoning. Sometimes, with the right spices, it can become even better, yes? Not that I wish to equate my work with meat, especially dead meat. Did you bring the death mask?"

"At your feet. You nearly made me crush it."

"Mm." The little man reached into the carpetbag he found next to the desk chair and lifted out a hemispherical plaster bust. He turned it in the light, admiring the strong, archetypally masculine peak of the nose, the brainy forehead, the almost ruthless cut of the mouth. The eyes were blank white convex surfaces. They always were, on a death mask casting. The featureless chalk-toned eyes seemed sealed, locked,

mortared up from the inside. On the masque of flawless cyan glass the little man had utilized earlier, the eyes had been holes—equally devoid of detail, yet ingresses, permitting passage in either direction. The glass had been polished, glossy, seductively cool to the touch. By comparison, the plaster half-face was a riot of rough texture; from it still ebbed the heat of its injection and hardening.

That, thought the little man, was a small but apt illustration of the difference between his own work, and that of Maurice—the littler man.

M. Rogoff laid the death mask next to his Rolodex. "And the body?"

The dwarf palpitated excitedly. "Oh, Monsieur! A true work of art. I have outdone myself. Only the most exotic raw materials, coupled with my secret formulae! By my watch, three entire days of curing the medium. I nursed it, yes, I baby-sat it. I think this one may last five, even six entire hours!"

That brought the little man's eyes up. Six! Unprecedented, even for Maurice. The dwarf sitting high across from him had a face like a baked apple, bad teeth, and darting black seeds for eyes. He wore threadbare rags, coat upon sweater upon shirts. Sometimes he smelled unpleasant. Nothing exterior hinted at the ability within that compact and eccentric package. His newest monster was good for six hours. Someday Maurice would reach the little man's own level of craft and skill. Someday he might become capable of making them the way M. Rogoff himself made them. But that would be all—Maurice, sadly, would never cultivate the other talents that the little man wielded with the same measures of care and adroitness.

That was exactly why the little man needed, on this job, to vary his technique somewhat. Thus, spice.

The little man's own evening of labor had been just as productive, though not as physically spectacular. As the advertisements went, he had reached out and touched someone. He had twisted knobs and adjusted the volume on another person's life. The tiles were laid; the subtle orchestrations were in place. Now that the monster was ready, and he approved—even of the too-perfect nostrils—it was time to click on the switch and watch the whole vast machine go up and down.

TODAY'S COCKFIGHT OVER *SINNER* HAD been postponed due to the line producer's dental appointment. Stupid.

Peter strolled down two offices, nodding and smiling at the receptionists and scurrying workers. The Xerox machine was down, and a panic was sim-

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mering. In places like this, the Xerox machines were always down.

Finding a vacant office was easy. Someone had gotten promoted or cashiered. He put his feet up on the desk-top, empty except for a blotter, an in-out box with a broken strut and no papers, and a digital clock. The telephone was a given. If there had been no desk in the vacated cubicle, there would still have been a phone.

Peter punched in Damon's number in Vancouver.

Damon laughed out loud for a full thirty seconds before catching his wind.

The revenge was tasty. Make those studio munchkins pay, pay, pay.

"Still with me, Damon?"

"Jesus, yeah. You're a beautiful man, Peter. Let's talk for a couple of hours."

Peter couldn't damp down the huge, loony grin on his face. Even if nothing had happened, it made him feel good to talk to Damon. "Five-to-ten odds that that club of lawyers and doctors you corralled together are still sitting around trying to equate you with the movin' pitcher biz."

"*Au contraire*, ace," Damon said. "A bank account was born yesterday, and you and I are the proud daddies. A hundred and fifty large. You see, it's that time of year again, and those lawyers and doctors discovered a sudden burning urge to invest. The one-fifty gets us the loan for the rest we'll need. Is the name *Flying A-Hole Productions* okay by you?"

Peter was glad for a hearty laugh, because the news had otherwise struck him speechless.

"You and I are set, captain. You have but to plunk your ass on a red-eye and make an X on some contracts. Of course, I've gotten pretty good at forging your signature, so you don't really have to—"

"This is going to knock her out," Peter whispered.

"Oh—by the way, guess who's interested in the part of the smuggler? Lawrence Banks."



"I have to tie off this mess here, first, and—"

"Banks got interested as soon as I told him you were involved, and that you were the guy who wrote and directed *The Fall of the Dream*—"

"I haven't even told her about *Objet d'Art* yet. I wonder if—"

Neither was receiving the other, and their conversation sounded like the madly overlapping dialogue in a Howard Hawks or Robert Altman movie. They both clammed up as if by telepathic agreement. Then each said, "*Hold it!*" in chorus. They wasted the next few seconds of prime phone time giggling madly.

Peter would have to re-read the *Objet d'Art* script for the hundredth time. Maybe on the plane. More crucially, he would have to review his contract for *Sinner* to find whether it would be easier to dump it or do it fast. Nothing in a contract was non-negotiable. You could even change the date on top if you used the right kind of *baksheesh*. Like brandy into coffee, his thoughts gradually sank into priority order and were assimilated.

Allea floated to the top.

"Peter? This is gonna knock who out?"

"Oh, Christ. That's right. You don't know yet."

"Who her? I mean, which her is 'who'? You know what I mean."

Peter chuckled, then sighed. "That's some question, really." His brain filled up with her. "Her name is Alea. I don't really know how to begin this... listen, Damon, you've got to meet her; she's... I mean, let me tell you about her!"

"Aha—my friend, your overpowering verbal ineptitude clues me that this is no couch-versus-starlet routine. Unlike the cheap, sleazy affairs littering your past, as perverted, disgusting, and downright illegal as they were. So how're you doing?"

"You don't know how good I feel, buddy. With Kathryn I was never such a wonderful person."

Damon's ready sarcasm was blotted out by the silence of growing awe. "Peter. Dear Peter. All of a sudden this sounds like something that is very real for you."

All the things he wanted to say funnelled down to a telling smile. "Yeah. God help me, Damon, she's important to me. She pulled me up out of the quicksand. A friend and a lover."

"Whew." Long-distance static crackled. Damon knew what this meant without having it spelled out. "I thought you were in an emotional nose-dive you'd never pull out of, ace. I gave you about two more months, max, before you tied one of those GI Joe plastic

He turned his head to glare at Peter through the crack in the door. His pupils were solid disks of bronze. They locked with his own eyes and held.

parachutes around your wang and leaped off the top of the Black Tower. *Nude Director With Uzi Hoses MCA Execs During Death Plunge*. But you sound one hundred percent. You actually sound happy. I don't think I've ever seen you do happy before. . ."

"I'm a fucking rocket. With you and her both, I'm on the verge of the highest high you've ever seen in your chemically enhanced life. I've got to tell her the news!"

"Hang back. First tell me where you met this angel."

"It was—" He felt the jump-start jolt of memory. "It was at that party you roped me into attending. The one at Shepard Bonnard's little hedonist villa in the Hills."

"There were dozens of women there; if I saw her I probably forgot her immediately."

"No, Damon, you'd remember Alea if you saw her even for a second, and she was with me nearly the whole time. You knew everybody on the guest list. Are you positive you didn't see her?"

"Whoa, boy. I know where you're headed. Listen. I was in hustle mode. I probably saw her, didn't track, and moved on. Next case. That party was like a subway car at rush hour, and a lot of pretty kiddies were on the carousel, and nothing personal. Okay?"

"Yeah, right. Sorry."

"Trot her along if you can. Scenic Vancouver. Use a gun if she needs convincing."

They both laughed. For a while they repeated themselves, more to run up the phone tab than to insure memory of particulars they already knew inside out.

Peter sped down Cahuenga West, leaving the sunroof on the Mazda open

in defiance of the cold snap. The bracing rush of air made him cocky, exuberant. These were sensations that were too long in coming home. For someone like Alea, Damon's news flash could not be contained by another phone call. Peter marveled. What had not been real an hour ago he was now going to deliver in person.

Out of the garage, up the elevator, double-timing down the corridor, he rehearsed, whispering to himself as he dredged up keys and unlocked his apartment deadbolt.

He shut up as soon as he was in. It was as if the very timbre of the air inside his home had tripped sensory alarms planted in his flesh. The door swung quietly back and the very ambience of the room hit him as sour, skewed. Something was wrong here.

His face crinkled the way it normally did when he smelled something offensive. It was not unlikely that he was walking in on a burglary in progress; an innate and nonspecific caution deep in the pit of his stomach warned him that if he was going to proceed, he should do so without a sound. He walked heel-and-toe, circumventing the sunken living room, sticking to the carpeted areas, breathing with escapee shallowness and not feeling a bit ridiculous.

In an insane fit of humor his persona vacated his body in order to observe the action through the eye of a director: Here is the ominous establishing shot of the hallway, shrouded in darkness; here, the Arriflex shot, jerky and hand-held, traversing the hall with that oddly cocked point of view that tips what we're seeing as being through the eyes of the butcher-knife wacko as he creeps up on the bedroom door. It is ajar by inches. Of course. More cinematic that way.

Alea made a noise.

It was like a gasp for breath, hard, distinct, perhaps cutting pain loose. A flashback image of Alea in jeopardy welled up but Peter suppressed it. The thudding of his heart was making his throat and temples pulsate. It became difficult for him to inhale.

She had made that sort of sound with him in bed. That was what kept him from bursting through the door in the role of white knight. Now a new image played across the screen of his mind, one that could not be shoved down. By the time his hand touched the bedroom door it was almost as if he had willed that dreadful picture into reality by the sheer force of his concentration.

Again, as on the night of the thousand candles, Peter saw his own empty bed. The room was lit in faint gold tones by the track lighting on the ceil-

ing; the rheostat was turned up about halfway. The sheets, blankets and pillows were strewn across the floor like the trail of clothing he had left on a night not so long ago. His view tracked along from the bed until he saw them on the floor.

They were enthusiastically missionary.

Peter watched a round, almost girlish ass thwack up-out, down-in, with the frenzy of a machine. Alea was beneath, feet in the air, legs bent at the knees, hands hooked so she could rock backward with each thrust. The man on top was sunk into her like a baby into a cradle. Broad shoulders, muscle-knotted back, short, badly styled dark hair. He pushed off into a quicker, rabidity pace as she enwrapped him, legs and groin rocking faster. Her feet, angled down in a dancer's point, flattened back as orgasm rollicked through her. Peter had never noticed that before. She clutched at him, pulled him down to meld with her, gasps tearing out of her throat. With a suicidal detachment, Peter marked the ascension and declination of each cry—up, up, peak, plateau, down, down, downdown.

Then laughter. It rose, as familiar to Peter as pain. A steel web, strands thread-thin and ice cold, constricted around his heart.

Her partner uttered not a sound.

Instead, he pushed up from her just enough to turn his head and glare directly at Peter through the two-inch crack in the door. His pupils were solid disks of bronze; they caught the overhead light and glistened as though chatoyant. Peter knew he was not visible, yet the eyes transfixed him, shimmering copper from lid to lid, no irises. They locked with his own eyes and held. Slowly, the man, the thing atop Alea, smiled at him. It was vampiric, hideous; the face seemed to rupture and shift thickly like molten wax.

Peter reeled from that malignant gaze, sucking in a startled breath and groping blindly for support. His knee bumped the door and it swung freely open. Alea's incubus was still staring at him with its death-head grin.

The plans of attack that had capered through Peter's brain—of kicking in the door, of doing violence, of using stealth and surprise-freaking them, of doing the manly thing, the macho thing, the mad reactionary thing—all shrivelled to nothingness under the targeted power behind those inhuman eyes. Peter froze.

Alea's voice unfroze him.

"Peter. Get out of here."

Her tone suggested that his intru-

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sion had been expected. The resonant and calm modulation of her speech was even more frightening than the soulless gaze of her demon lover.

Peter began to tremble. No stopping it.

The lover with the sculpted torso devoid of moles or blemishes resumed fucking her, penetrating to the hilt, his buttocks clenching with each push. Alea's hands scamped over his body, grabbing the protruding shoulder blades, touching the smooth small of his back, cupping his ass, her fingernails leaving white and bloodless indentations in the perfect skin.

Amputated from those eyes, that smile, Peter swallowed hard and stumbled back. His body forced him to flee on a purely autonomic level; his mind

was stunned and shut down. Numbly, stupidly, he slammed his own apartment door behind him as he fled into the corridor.

In five minutes he came back.

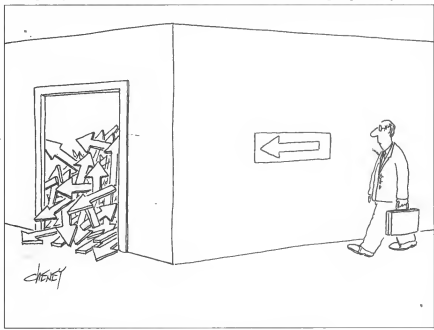
He had run like a gazelle down the stairs. He took the elevator back up. It had not taken him long to wrest control, to come back into himself. In the grip of his right hand the claw hammer swung pendulously. He had gotten it from the Mazda's trunk; a carpenter's hammer, a foot-long haft of wood terminating in several pounds of drop-forged steel. Two metal wedges cinched the head solid.

Peter smiled pleasantly at the elderly woman in the car with him as the numerals blinked upward. The two poodles at her feet yapped and danced. Peter smiled. The woman watched the numbers and pretended not to notice the crazy roadmaps of dry tears that formed a shiny latticework on his face. He was disgorged on the seventh floor. His smile remained cemented in place.

He was thinking of what he could do to his visitor's face with the hammer, what the claw-end would do to his unearthly eyes, how the vee of the claw would become clotted with hair and blood and skull and brains, oh yeah.

He unlocked his door normally, shifting the hammer to his left hand. Everything was unchanged inside. He shifted the tool back because the biceps were better in his right arm—more swinging momentum, more impact. He moved back down the hall, strolling now, skin tingling, ears pricking for sounds, but otherwise totally composed.

The smile hung improbably on his



face like a mortician's final joke on a corpse.

He used the head of the hammer to push the re-closed bedroom door open again. The hammer thunked heavily against the hollow-core door, which rasped back along the carpeting. The knob bumped against the back wall.

The trailers were over and it was time for the main feature.

The bed was still empty. But this time, so was the room. Five minutes, and they had cleared out.

He glanced around, double checking, the metabolic backwash requesting permission to throw up now, please. He fancied he felt his soul emerge a soft hiss of relief. In a second, he knew his fall had been aborted. What might have happened was not going to happen. The thought of what he had intended did not sicken him; it became a dull ache that settled in alongside the others already imprisoned inside him. He could deal with it. The apartment was empty. Alea was gone.

Again.

His big mirror, five feet on a side, was canted against the bedroom's west wall. He caught sight of himself. He looked haggard and old. He thought of the body bills he had run up on his compulsive all-night shoots, using caffeine as collateral for one more hour, dexedrine caps for one more night. He thought of where his life had been *invested*, of karmic loans, and considered the hammer in his hand, his gaze moving from it back to his own face, as if requesting not absolution, but just a simple explanation.

This was the crash point. Crash, as in bankruptcy, as in the Great Depression, as in what happens when you slit a computer's throat, as in that's all there is and there ain't no more.

He planted the hammer into the center of the mirror, into his own burned-out image. *Crash*.

CROUCHING BEHIND THE SEVENTH-FLOOR door, Maurice monitored the corridor through the rectangle of wire-gridded window until Peter Deutsch emerged from his apartment. The man was disheveled, off-kilter; there were slivers of glass in his hair. His eyes hung in purplish sockets. They saw little, recorded nothing. Maurice thought of feeble bulbs flaring their last, then smiled.

They almost always looked this way when the fun began.

The elevator doors met, terminating his view of the lost man with the hammer still depending from one fist. Maurice eased the fire door open. He

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had blocked the latch with a slip of cardboard. Since there was never much traffic within these high-rent filing cabinets, he quickly padded down the corridor, his nudity of no concern. His comically exaggerated phallus bobbed from thigh to thigh like a bell clapper.

From behind his ear he plucked the key, fabricated several days back from a wax impression, and unlocked Peter's door. He vanished inside, water slipping past oil.

The smashed mirror was strewn about the bedroom floor in ten thousand pieces. Maurice did not even slow his pace, and wicked silver barbs punched deeply into the soft soles of his feet. A jagged, five-inch wedge caught and pierced, erupting through the top of his right foot just behind the big toe. The point jutting from the split flesh was dulled with gobs of red clay.

In Peter's bathroom Maurice gave the counter mirror a jolly salute, then gouged out his eyes with the white points of his tapered, perfect fingernails. Two clay-smeared Lincoln pennies rang merrily as they spun in the bowl of the sink. He pushed the stopper down to keep from losing them. Then he unfolded the ivory-handled Gay Nineties straight razor that had been presented to Peter as a birthday gift, used once, then left on display...where it could do no further damage.

Maurice jabbed the point of the stropped blade into his throat below the Adam's apple. A drop of oil oozed forth. He held firm and sliced shallowly floorward, stopping at the root of the penis.

The monster, gutted, eyeless, was still standing before the mirror. Still smiling.

Maurice's stubby hands eased out of the monster's chest and grasped the lips

of the slit. He shucked the entire carcass like a scuba suit, and once he was out it piled up bonelessly on the floor. He herded the rubbery mass together, scooped it into the bathtub, and cranked the shower tap to full hot. While steam clouded out from behind the pebbled glass door, the dwarf grabbed one of Peter's bath towels and mopped sweat.

In moments the shell of Alea's non-human fuckmate had dissolved and escaped into the pipework. Now it was just several gallons of liquid clay headed for the city sewer network.

Jingling his pennies, Maurice fetched his carpetbag from the bedroom closet. He pulled out wads of his own clothing and replaced them with the jeans and tee shirt worn earlier by the monster. Maurice had known Peter Deutsch would be too preoccupied to ever notice the extra, alien bag amid his own closet clutter.

When he raided Peter's bar for a congratulatory nip, he discovered some excellent VSOP and decided to liberate the bottle. It had gone very well tonight. Now it was time for M. Rogoff to work the magic, as only he could. Time now to play the hooked fish toward home's waiting frypan. Or, as Maurice was inclined to think, time to fire the clay lovingly initiated by his master's hands. The next item on Peter Deutsch's agenda was the blissful hell of M. Rogoff's kiln.

ABUCK IMPELLED INTO DEATH By a speeding car has no concept of why its concert of musculature feebles into painful unreliability, or for what reason it finally crumples to earth, husking autumn air. While the planet whirls in its orbit, the buck dies with no sense of event, not even feeling chosen, just as the automobile lacks a sense of having been selected by the creature into which it is destined to crash. On freeways with no mouth and no terminus, it rushes headlong until it stops or flies free of the path. Animal and machine, primitive to modern, hurtling together in shared ignorance, cognizant only of motion and impact and pain.

And so in the lost card of the Tarot, The Falling Man falls forever—unaware of how he was precipitated, or whether his plummet will end in a soft, corporeal cloudbank or in the fatally unyielding flatness of a round Earth. His role is to guide superstitious mortals in their affairs by continuing his fall for eternity. The card cues a Path of Life not trodden in symbolic soil, but inscribed upon the wind itself, as transient as skywriting, as fundamental as oxygen, as mutagenic as love.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

NEW HORROR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

and with our fellow man. As Robert R. McCammon has said: "Horror writing is the fundamental literature of humanity... I'll stick with it until I find a kind of literature that speaks more strongly about the human condition. I don't think there is one."

"We are dealing with difficult subjects," Skipp concedes. "We are dealing with sexual brutality, the nature and ramifications of real flesh-and-blood violence. It's ugly terrain; very scary stuff. And it doesn't surprise us that some people freak out when they read it. But there is a readership for this kind of writing. A lot of folks are looking for someone to deal with this stuff in a straight-ahead fashion, to go all the way while retaining a strong sense of humanity. But a lot of other people think you can't, or shouldn't, do this. That because we write it, we must be inhuman monsters. The biggest bone of

contention thrown at us by our critics is that we have no moral compass. That's bullshit."

In his recent TZ interview, British writer J. G. Ballard noted that many people refuse to acknowledge "the immense hold that violence exerts over people. It seems to me that's unhealthy," he said. "One should face up to the realities of human nature. That way, one can do something about improving it...."

The Splatterpunks, like all other practitioners of the New Horror, are fighting fire with fire, darkness with darkness, in an attempt to locate the light at the end. They don't pretend to hold all the answers. But they do, at least, attempt to index the possibilities.

As Harry Dean Stanton says to Emilio Estevez in the film *Repo Man*:

"Normal folks try to stay away from intense situations. Repo men *cause* intense situations...."

That quote could stand as the battle cry of the New Horror.

DOUGLAS E. WINTER ON SPLATTERPUNK AND "ANTI-HORROR"

Critic and author Douglas E. Winter, who recently made his own major contribution to the New Horror with his anthology *Prime Evil* (NAL), terms the most significant trend in horror fiction "Anti-horror."

"Traditional horror fiction is about conformity," according to Winter. "It's about an external force intruding into everyday life, being confronted, beaten; with a subsequent return to the status quo."

"From my perspective, conformity is one of the principal aesthetics of Splatterpunk. The volume of the content may be loud, but the form itself is not radical."

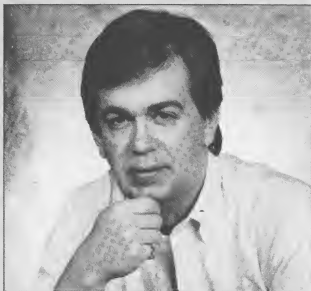
"What I term 'Anti-horror' is not particularly concerned with conformity. Anti-horror takes the typical horror story and turns it on itself, asking the reader to reflect upon what it is the reader is reading and why: to view traditional images of horror in a new way."

"Splatterpunk seems to display a genuine love for the form," says Winter, "and a sincere desire to 'kick against the pricks,' to rub up against certain traditional elements. But it doesn't concern itself with altering some of the fundamentals of the form. *The Scream*, for example, is a very conservative novel."

"Personally, I don't feel Skipp and Spector are anywhere near their potential as writers. They are clearly maturing with each novel in terms of their ideas and ambitions, which bodes well for the future; that I find exciting. Also, they're terribly enthusiastic, both as writers and people, and I enjoy that 'aspect of their work very much. There is a very real sense of movement and enthusiasm in their writing. 'The downside is that I don't yet feel a real sense of depth to their work. The technical pyrotechnics often distract from what they are trying to do with the subtext, from the ideas they are attempting to explore.'"

Winter concedes that the Splatterpunks are good for horror, bringing in energy and vitality, and fresh, irrelevant perspective. Behind them, however, is the weight of "Anti-horror," a viewpoint that tears at the fabric of reality itself.

"Clive Barker is a good example of 'Anti-horror,'" says Winter. "A lot of his fiction deals with liberation,



of placing images before you in a manner that is intended to liberate you from the normal perception of what the fiction is doing. Barker is capable of presenting imagery that's at once horrible yet beautiful. He's saying: 'This is a window inside you, a window to the world around you.'

"'Anti-horror' doesn't attempt to impose a closed world, to attempt reintegration; does not return the reader to the world that the reader started out in or reassure the reader that the world he's in is one that can be returned to normal, to conformity. It is a fiction that is saying 'Let's change all the rules,' and consequently there is a more open-ended result."

"In 'Anti-horror,' it's not the intrusion that's the horror, it is what has existed *before* the intrusion, what may well exist afterwards. Ultimately," he concludes, "it is our lives that make the horror—and that is 'Anti-horror.'"

—Philip Nutman

TZ SCREENING ROOM



▲ **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?** "Toon Kills Man," scream the headlines in '40s Hollywood as Roger Rabbit—pictured here, with Bob (*Mona Lisa*) Hoskins—tries to clear himself of a frame-up murder charge in Touchstone Pictures/Amblin Entertainment's *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?* This Roger (*Back to the Future*) Zemekis production also stars Joanna Cassidy, Donald and Daffy Duck, Christopher Lloyd and a certain other carrot-chomping rabbit....

► VIBES

Cyndi Lauper (in her acting debut) and Jeff (*The Fly*) Goldblum co-star as a pair of psychics who team up in the romantic comedy *VIBES*. Also starring is Peter Falk, who leads the duo on a mysterious mission to the mountains of Ecuador.



DESPITE ITS POSH REPUTATION, THE Cannes Film Festival is, in some ways, the "K-Mart" of movie projects and properties. Every year hordes of stars, filmmakers, and studio executives flock to the French coastal town for several weeks of shopping about for new films to finance, financing for new films, and new distributors for projects in the works. Since the Writers Guild of America strike is still going on as of this writing, we thought it might be fun to give you a peek inside the lifestyles of these rich and famous, and show you some of the inner workings of this movie marketplace.

There are four kinds of movies promoted at Cannes: those which are completed, those currently shooting, those ready to start production, and those which are little more than an idea in search of backers. Each year, the *Variety* Magazine International Film Annual is distributed to every Cannes attendee. The 31st Annual, which weighed in this year at a hefty 564 pages and three pounds, twelve ounces, lists dozens of forthcoming films in the fantasy genre—some big-budget efforts already in post-production, some quickies still being pulled together at press time. Some—with no announced cast, director, or script—are little more than a painting, a title (often tentative), and a catchy slogan. Taken in total, they represent a snapshot of the state of the art in sf, fantasy, and horror films. We've listed a few of the more interesting ones below:

Shapiro Glickenhau, which scored a minor hit with their spring release *Shakedown*, is bidding for similar success with *The Wizard of Speed and Time*, a wall-to-wall special-effects extravaganza that is a feature-length expansion on a short subject made a few years ago. Also due from this studio is *Moontrap*, a space adventure starring Walter Koenig (Pavel Chekov of *Star Trek*), *Shadow Dancing*, the tale of two immortal dancers, *The Brain* (a malevolent brain runs wild) and the rock 'n' roll/horror story *Black Roses*.

"Head Cheerleader. It's an honor to die for," is the slogan for Manson Entertainment's *Bloody Pom-Poms*. This one has been in the last few *Variety*s, but has finally made it onto Manson's upcoming list, so it should be here soon. Stars Betsy Russell and Lucinda (Ninja III—*The Domination*) Dickey.

Robofox, from a script by Joe Halde-
man, is due from Empire Entertainment. Empire, makers of several recent



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▲ PHANTASM II

One of the most disturbing cult films of the last ten years has to be *Phantasm*, a surreal tale of fantasy, horror, and science fiction in a world where the line between nightmare and reality all but disappeared. What the Tall Man, his Flying

Steel Ball and the Dwarfs from the other dimension were up to was never made clear, but we may get to find out this time in *PHANTASM II*, the sequel to director Don Coscarelli's classic, new this summer from Universal.

TZ SCREENING ROOM



▲ **NOT OF THIS EARTH**
Jim Wynorski's remake of the classic 1950s "B" film, *NOT OF THIS EARTH*, about aliens who must drink human blood (along with, as we see here, other more explosive concoctions) to survive, is sure to attract as many screams of terror and laughter as the original Roger Corman film. On a dare from Corman, this new version was reputedly shot in twelve days just like the original. This one features ex-porn star Traci Lords, in her first legitimate acting role, as the nurse who must help save Earth from alien bloodsuckers.

► **GOTHAM**
Nothing is normal in detective Eddie Mallard's (Tommy Lee Jones) life: hired to find Rachel Carlyle (Virginia Madsen) by her husband, Mallard falls in love with her. The case takes a bizarre turn when Mallard discovers the woman he loves has been dead for the last ten years and that he's been having an affair with a ghost. Things only get stranger in Showtime's original-for-cable production of *GOTHAM*.



H.P. Lovecraft films (*Re-Animator*, *From Beyond*), have, as always, a huge number of genre films on their schedule. Among those completed: *Arena* (a prizefight in outer space film), and *Pulse Pounders*, which, from the cast list, seems to be a sequel to the movie *Trancers* from a few years ago.

Sporting perhaps the strangest group of films is Empire's subsidiary company, Beyond Infinity Film Sales, which has ready for release *Night Crew: The Final Checkout* (which has a poster of a severed human head being rung up on a supermarket checkout line next to a head of lettuce), *Assault of the Killer Bimbos*, *Waldo Warren: Private Eye Without a Brain*, *Hack 'Em High*, and in production, *Piranha Women*, *Bimbo Barbeque*, *The Dirty Filthy Slime*, and *I was a Teenage Sex Mutant*.

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase (from Joan Aiken's young adult fantasy novel) and a film called *Dream Demon* are completed from Atlantic Entertainment.

House III is in pre-production from Manley Productions, while Nelson Entertainment has *Me and Him* ready for release. *Me and Him* should raise more than a few eyebrows as Griffin Dunne plays a man who has conversations with his genitals. Also stars Ellen Greene.

In the wake of *Police Academy* and *Stewardess School*, Landmark Films/Skouras International brings us the story of the place that trains the fine young men and women who will deal with the casualties of the other groups' bungling: *Mortuary Academy*. In the same-er-vein(?), New Star Entertainment delivers *Frankenstein General Hospital*, due out this summer.

Freddy Krueger has his glove blades, Jason has his butcher knives, and The Destroyer has his laser-sight assisted jackhammer in *Destroyer*, a TMS Pictures release starring Deborah Foreman, Lyle Alzado, and Anthony Perkins.

From MGM, George Cosmatos's *Leviathan* is finally in production. Starring Peter (Robocop) Weller, Richard (Rambo) Crenna, and Amanda (Max Headroom) Pays, this frequently delayed film of undersea terror finally started shooting in April.

George Romero has two films due out in the near future: *Ella*, formerly titled *Monkeyshines*, is the story of a young man who is confined to a wheelchair

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◀ NIGHTFALL

A world of eternal daylight. A world where darkness exists only in caves and the people live in fear of the once-a-millennium NIGHTFALL. From the award-winning short story by Isaac Asimov, starring David Birney and Sarah Douglas (Concorde Pictures).

and is given a monkey to help him around the house. The horror begins when the monkey starts committing evil acts. Currently in production at Cinevest Pictures is *Apartment Living*, in which Romero explores the supernatural horrors of living in an apartment in New York.

Comic book characters are becoming more and more popular as a source of ideas in Hollywood, as evidenced by New World Pictures' recent purchase of Marvel Comics. It has not taken them long to get certain characters off the comic pages and onto the silver screen and, as we speak, the costumed vigilante *The Punisher* is being lensed, with strongman Dolph Lundgren (*Masters Of the Universe*) in the lead as the Vietnam vet who takes on the Mafia in a one-man war on crime when his family is killed by the mob. Directed by Mark Goldblatt. Also due from New World: *Return of the Killer Tomatoes*. Need we say more?

Communion, the memoir by Whitley Strieber about his visitations by alien beings, is being made into a film by Vestron Pictures.

The *Batman* film, one which promises to have a much more serious slant than the sixties television series, is slated to

start shooting in England in August, with Tim (*Beetlejuice*) Burton directing. The main villain of this Warner Bros. film is The Joker. Burton will be working from a script by Sam Hamm (*Never Cry Wolf*). The filming of the projected twenty-million-dollar film will begin in England, where the latest James Bond film, *License Revoked*, has been evicted from Pinewood Studios for the construction of several Gotham City sets.

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen (which we previewed here several years ago), Terry (*Brazil*) Gilliam's latest production, has finally finished shooting after years of delays and Gilliam is now deeply involved in overseeing the special effects for the thirteen-million-dollar picture. The film stars Katherine Helmond and is based on the classic book of the same name.

For sheer strangeness, there are few men stranger than stage magicians/con men Penn and Teller. After an incredible run on Broadway, they have made a movie. The title? *Penn and Teller Get Killed*, due any time now from Lorimar. Also in production at Lorimar is Jim Henson's *The Witches*, based on the novel by Roald Dahl.

New Century/Vista is taking a crack at

the writings of a man whose work has had an uneven track record in film adaptation: Stephen King. Ricky Schroeder and Nicol (*Excalibur*) Williamson star in *Apt Pupil*, based on the novella from the collection *Different Seasons* about a young boy who is first the student, and then the teacher, of an aging Nazi. As of this writing this project is in limbo, but is sure to get back into production soon.

And to finish off, we have two sequels: *Cocoon II: The Return*, which shows us how the residents of the old-age home have dealt with a few years in space. It's due in the next few weeks from 20th Century-Fox. This project was slowed by negotiations with Brian Dennehy to reprise his role as the leader of the aliens from the first film. He has agreed to make a cameo appearance in the new film. And *Chud II* is due from Vestron, as more of the Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers make their way up from the depths. This film started shooting in March, so keep and eye out for it...and them.

That's all for now. As with all such projects, be advised that stars and directors might change any time, and that we will be keeping you up to date on these as developments occur. ■

1 9 8 8

Rod Serling's
THE **TWILIGHT ZONE** Magazine
**READER SURVEY
RESULTS**

We asked you, the readers
of *The Twilight Zone*, to tell
us a bit about yourselves—
your background, your
preferences, what you enjoy
most about the magazine.
Now we'd like to share the
results with you.

As many of you know, we included a Reader Survey questionnaire in our Seventh Anniversary Issue (April 1988). We wanted to find out a little more about you in order to serve you better.

The information you gave us proved fascinating, educational, and sometimes a little startling. You weren't shy about sharing your thoughts with us—several of you wrote multi-page letters to us with very specific and heartfelt comments. Our thanks to all of you who took the time to complete the survey and mail it in to us.

A PORTRAIT OF OUR READERS

Poll results are often deceptive. The "average" reader is seldom like the individuals who make up the sampling. In fact, our readership is made up of several "populations" with differing tastes and interests.

To make the results of the survey more real, we've indulged in a bit of imagination, creating composite portraits of two of our typical readers, whom we'll call "Reader #1" and "Reader #2." Though these sketches are simplifications, they are based on extensive study of the survey information and accurately reflect the results of that study:

Reader #1: You are female, 34, married, and living in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area. Odds are you have at least one child under the age of 12, and

you work at least part time. Although you live fairly well, it's a struggle to afford the kinds of things you want for yourself and your family. You don't go out to the movies much anymore. Nowadays, you usually rent a film at the local video shop, one you can watch with the whole family (which rules out the more intense, graphic horror films).

You read incessantly, at least two to three books a month (though you have less time for it than you used to). You enjoy horror novels and mysteries, occasional science fiction when the characters are strong, and once in a while a fantasy novel if it's not too hokey. You wouldn't be caught dead reading a Romance. Your favorite author is Stephen King.

You'd like to see more stories by authors you like in *The Twilight Zone*, more new writers (chances are you've tried your hand at writing yourself), and articles on (and perhaps reprints of) the grand old masters of horror and suspense. You enjoy movie reviews and previews as long as they've got depth, and you wish we could review more books in the magazine.

You like articles on the supernatural, enjoy reading about vampires and werewolves and ghosts. But you think we went a bit far with our "New Age" coverage. You still enjoy the original *Twilight Zone* episodes, and you'd like to see a bit more about them, and about Rod Serling, in the magazine. Most of all, you wish the magazine were published monthly.

Reader #2: You're male, in your mid-to late-twenties, most probably single and living alone in a large city. You work in a white-collar or technical job, and you earn a comfortable living; enough to buy the things you like most of the time. You go out to the movies about twice a month. You enjoy special-effects films (you've thought about writing or directing) and action/adventure when it's not too macho or bone-headed.

You read a lot of books, though not quite as many as Reader #1. The rest of your reading time is devoted to magazines—at least a dozen a month. You enjoy science fiction most (though you're getting into horror) and like fantasy when it has a strong plot and an interesting setting.

You'd like to see more color film previews in *Twilight Zone* and more interviews with filmmakers. You like Gahan Wilson's film reviews, but wish they were more current. You enjoy illustration and graphics, and you'd like to see more color art portfolios, and perhaps some of the better comics artists as well.

You like the fiction in *Twilight Zone*, but lately some of the stories have seemed a little too long and a bit too obscure. You'd like the fiction to be more in the spirit of Rod Serling's original show. You've been collecting the magazine for some time, and you miss the episode guides and the original *Twilight Zone* scripts. You'd like us to put them back in the magazine. Like Reader #1, you'd also like the magazine to be monthly.

CONCLUSIONS

Of course, these two portraits can't represent all of our readers. We've gotten letters, especially from older readers and those in rural areas, who feel some of the material in the magazine is a little strong. And we've heard from inner-city teens who wish we'd be more intense. You can't please everyone, after all.

One thing came through loud and clear, however. *The Twilight Zone* is a very special magazine to you. You've told us "There's no other magazine like it," in dozens of different ways. You enjoy the magazine very much, (a ninety-nine percent approval rating), and plan to stick with it.

As a result of reading through the surveys, and collating the data, we feel we know you better—what you like most about us, and what you'd like to see changed. Beginning next issue, we're going to be making a number of those changes in *The Twilight Zone*, in order to give you the magazine you've told us you want. We'll talk more about them next issue.

Thanks again for telling us about yourselves.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

SEX:

Women	52%
Men	48%

MARITAL STATUS:

Single	58%
Married	34%
Separated, Divorced	8%
Widowed	

EDUCATION:

Attend(ed) High School	12%
Graduated High School	21%
Attend(ed) College	29%
Graduated College	18%
Postgrad. Study	20%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

Over \$50,000	8%
\$30,000 to \$50,000	30%
\$20,000 to \$30,000	21%
Less than \$20,000	31%
No response	10%

BOOKS READ IN LAST YEAR:

21 or more	50%
10 to 20	21%
7 to 10	12%
6 or less	17%

FILMS SEEN IN THEATERS IN LAST 90 DAYS:

None	27%
1 to 3	34%
4 to 6	19%
7 to 10	12%
11 or more	8%

KINDS OF BOOKS YOU ENJOY MOST:

(Rated "Very Enjoyable"	
or "Somewhat Enjoyable")	
#1 Horror	94%
#2 Science Fiction	92%
#3 Fantasy	91%
#4 Mystery/Suspense	90%
#5 Nonfiction	84%

KINDS OF BOOKS YOU ENJOY LEAST:

#1 Romance	73%
#2 Westerns	70%
#3 Historical Novels	34%

KINDS OF FILMS YOU ENJOY MOST:

(Rated "Very Enjoyable"	
or "Somewhat Enjoyable")	
#1 Science Fiction	98%
#2 Comedy	97%
#3 Mystery/Suspense	95%
#4 Fantasy	94%
#5 Action/Adventure	93%
#6 Horror	88%

KINDS OF FILMS YOU ENJOY LEAST:

(Rated "Not Enjoyable")	
#1 Romantic	55%
#2 Westerns	45%
#3 Documentary	27%
#4 Classical/Historical	25%

FAVORITE MAGAZINES

(Other than <i>Twilight Zone</i> , of course)	
#1 <i>Omni</i>	35%
#2 <i>Alfred Hitchcock</i>	24%
#3 <i>F&SF</i>	22%
#4 <i>Asimov's SF</i>	18%
#5 <i>Fangoria</i>	16%
#6 <i>Amazing Stories</i>	14%
#7 <i>Ellery Queen</i>	13%
#8 <i>Starlog</i>	12%
* <i>Analog</i> (tie)	12%
#10 <i>Heavy Metal</i>	11%

MOST POPULAR BOOK CLUBS:

#1 SF Book Club	22%
#2 Book of the Month	15%
#3 Literary Guild	10%
#4 Mystery Guild	9%
#5 Quality Paperback	8%

AVERAGE READERS PER COPY: 2

HOW MANY OF LAST SIX ISSUES YOU'VE READ:

All	78%
3 to 5	15%
2 or less	7%

WHERE YOU GET YOUR COPY:

Subscription direct from publisher	66%
From Subscription agency	13%
Newsstand, drugstore, etc.	12%
Book or specialty store	9%

TWILIGHT ZONE FEATURES YOU ENJOY MOST:

#1 Fiction	97%
#2 Covers	96%
#3 Feature Articles	95%
#4 Cartoons	94%
* Movie Reviews (tie)	94%
#6 Articles on the Unexplained	93%
#7 Illustrations	92%
#8 Articles on Rod Serling or <i>The Twilight Zone</i>	91%
#9 Book Reviews	90%
#10 Color Film Previews	89%
#11 Illuminations/The Other Side	88%
#12 Color art Gallery	87%
#13 Interviews	85%
#14 Episode Guides	81%
#15 TV Scripts	78%

HOW ENJOYABLE YOU FIND THE TWILIGHT ZONE OVERALL:

Very enjoyable	88%
Somewhat enjoyable	11%

SCREEN

GAHAN WILSON

Embarrassment of Riches:
Our reviewer copes with
a feast of fantasy after
months of filmic famine.

Eat the Rich (New Line Cinema)
Bad Dreams (Twentieth Century-Fox)
Beetlejuice (Warner Bros.)
Willow (Lucasfilm Ltd.)

FOR REASONS UNCLEAR TO ME (MUCH IS UNCLEAR to me), the cinematic powers-that-be have, in the period since our last meeting, seen fit to release such a torrent of movies that I've been forced, for the first time in ages, to pick and choose which ones to mention and which to throw away.

Good Taste is Timeless

My last review in these pages came after a period nearly bone-dry of fantastic films, and I wrote a guardedly kindly report on a satiric British effort involving humorously depicted cannibalistic goings-on and gave it star billing with another, unrelated effort, essentially because there wasn't anything else to write about. If it had come out with this batch, I probably wouldn't have mentioned the thing at all, except, perhaps, to contrast it unfavorably with *Eat the Rich*, which was, in my opinion, the best of the bizarre offerings released in this present, inexplicable deluge of the gruesome and fantastic. *Eat the Rich* does a really dandy job not just on cannibalism, but on our species' peculiar and persistent habit of regarding one another not as living, breathing fellow creatures—but as things which we all feel free to endlessly exploit, if not actually devour. Life is unfair.



WHY THE LONG FACE? Geena Davis pulls out the stops in *Beetlejuice*.

Eat the Rich, directed and partly written by Peter Richardson (Peter Richens wrote the rest) of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fame, only managed to survive here in New York in a small theater for about two weeks. (As I said, life is unfair.) But, given the film's quality, I suspect it will build a following. And if the group which put it all together—a bunch of insane Brits calling itself the Comic Strip—only remembers to breakfast and exercise regularly, they may yet enjoy a Monty Python-ish sort of success, and life won't be quite so unfair after all.

Eat begins with the best vicious take-off on a posh restaurant (it's called, simply, *Bastards*) I've had the pleasure of seeing so far. It cruelly mocks the pretensions of such a restaurant's clients,

waiters and maitre d', and has considerable nasty fun with the menu, as well. (The place is one of those miserable eateries which delight in speeding the extermination of various endangered species by offering bits of pandas and so on for its customers' delight, rather than the usual slaughtered cows.)

We see the restaurant first from on high so as to get the full effect of its hog-trough confusion. That's followed by a slow descent to table level, which is something like being lowered into a pit of feeding lions or the brawling floor of the commodities market. The place is fully engaged in the basic debate of who shall eat and who shall be eaten and it's taking place on every level from the gastronomic on up (or down), including the customers' and waiters'

battles for the best table.

The prime loser in this particular engagement is played by Lanah Pellay (who seems to have come along just in time to inherit the crown of the late, lamented Divine of John Waters's little troupe), portraying a waiter who pleases neither his spoiled and demanding gourmands, nor his frantic floor boss, and is therefore hurled unceremoniously out into the street. This irritates him so that he forthwith begins to foment a rebellion, gathering up such diverse types as a delightfully foul-mouthed old vaudeville and an angry woman afflicted with pregnancy, thus activating one of the film's many subplots.

Another subplot, maybe the most effectively vicious of the lot, concerns the doings of a supremely crude and bullying Home Secretary, played with positively fantastic authority by Noshier Powell. Mr. Powell, though he speaks in an elaborately lower-class Cockney dialect and is forever popping open cans of beer, may be the best putdown of Winston Churchill to date. The sight of Powell charging through dillydallying police lines in order to personally batter anarchists with his bare fists, or slamming a union leader against a paneled wall during an elegant evening party until he whimpers and gives in to conservative logic, does more to evoke old Winnie than anything I've seen in years. (The character is not altogether derivative, however. I don't see Churchill attempting a crude—though enthusiastically received—sexual assault on the person of the Queen. I think Noshier did that one on his own.)

Rather than confuse you with more details of the various plots and degradations offered by *Eat the Rich*, I think it would be best to let the movie confuse and degrade you on its own. Allow me to say that it does, indeed, eventually descend enthusiastically into actual cannibalism, and to inform you that I recommend it highly. But, life being unfair, you will probably find it next to impossible to track the thing down.

Keeping Up with Jim Jones
Bad Dreams is a first effort on the part of Andrew Fleming, who directed and, with the help of Steven E. deSouza, wrote it. It falters, now and then, and is more than a mite heavy-handed on occasion, but, for a first try, is a nice little horror movie which will make you jump and, by and large, keep you interested throughout.

The essential gimmick's a very good one: a young woman of the sixties barely survives the ghastly slaughter of a cult by its ever-loving guru, but is



WAKE-UP CALL: Jennifer Rubin in the not too *Bad Dreams*.

plunged into a coma from the injuries received, and only awakens in our present era: the eighties. (What will they make of the eighties? Not much, I fear.) Here she finds herself the subject of much attention by the psychiatrists running the institution where she has been housed.

The guru also survives in a ghostly, ghastly fashion, and appears in frightening visions to his erstwhile disciple, sometimes as his old, Timothy Leary-ish handsome, smooth-talking self, sometimes as a hideously charred (but still smooth-talking) burnt cadaver. His continuing presence brings the old hippie commune philosophy and style into an amusing juxtaposition with contemporary psychiatry's philosophy and style. It may be that *Bad Dreams* is not fair either to the hippies or the psychiatrists, but, since it is, after all, a horror movie, you certainly can't be too hard on it if it presents a rather paranoid view of them both. (I must confess that it seems to me that a few home truths about both establishments were not unskillfully presented.) A light diversion, but cleverly alloyed, and I enjoyed it.

Fresh Squeezed
Getting into the larger budgets and bigger financial successes, we arrive at *Beetlejuice*, a comedy about what happens to us after we Get It, directed by Tim Burton from a script by Michael McDowell, Larry Wilson, and Warren Skaeren, and starring Michael Keaton as either another decaying survivor from the hippie era or a demon (the movie's theology is a little vague). This creature takes it upon itself to aid and abet a couple whose attempts at restor-

ing the traditional charms of an old house in the country have been complicated by their being drowned and turned into ghosts.

The Afterlife is amusingly and horrifyingly presented in *Beetlejuice*. Some of the dearly departed on view reminded me strongly of various versions of the defunct which I myself have, from time to time, presented. There is, for example, a spread-out fellow with a tire track running along his middle. There's a fellow with a shrunken head who resembles a victim of a Jivaro Indian attack, and the charred relic of a smoker in bed still trying to give up the habit. All these above are encountered in Limbo, which turns out to be a supernatural Waiting Room where, believe me, you wait!

The dead young couple mentioned earlier are doing their waiting because they wish to complain about another, living couple, who have moved into their house. This new duo have not only usurped their domain, they have despoiled the dead couple's plans for loving restoration and turned the house into a post-modern horror, complete with exterior framing structures. After the Waiting Room fails them, they resort to Sylvia Sidney, who plays an after-death social worker who apparently expired of lung cancer but still can't give up smoking. (Now she exhales through the opening from the operation.) She gives them some excellent advice: since they are ghosts, why not haunt the place and scare the new tenants away?

The couple embark on the project but fail dismally, even with the hideous facial distortion techniques taught them by Sidney. The new, obnoxious couple decides that having a haunted house is

SCREEN

marvelous and can't wait to invite their chic New York friends over to see the ghosts. This escalates the entire conflict, forcing the dead couple to employ the services of Beetlejuice (Keaton). Here the movie turns into a hyperkinetic comedy spectacular which clearly demonstrates Burton's Disney training. (This indicates once more that traditional animation had better either get with it and break new artistic ground or it will be henceforth restricted to Snoopy stories on TV—while the imaginative types move off to do movie special effects.)



HERO AT LARGE: Warwick Davis as the small-but-courageous Willow.

Keaton has the most fun of all in the film, and the whole exercise is quite a proof of his talents. A lesser soul (no pun intended) might have been daunted, if not totally buried, by the ultragrottesque makeup and enormous and confusing props he has to work with, not to mention the above-mentioned FX. But Keaton has the energy and outrageousness required to make it all his servant. I had no idea, frankly, he was as good as he shows himself to be in *Beetlejuice*, a movie which does, decidedly, have its flaws, but which no loyal reader of a magazine such as *Twilight Zone*, including myself, could possibly view with anything but affection, when all is said and done.

Willow: The Wisp

Going even more upscale financially, I mean really, *really* upscale, we arrive at the towering heights of *Willow*, which must have cost as much as your average Central American country. (Sudden idea for Reagan and/or Bush and/or Dukakis

and/or Jackson: Why not tear up Central America and have George Lucas rebuild it the way the majority of voters would like it to be? Just a thought.) More than once I found my thoughts straying from the mythic Dark Ages, in which *Willow* is set, to the present-day boardrooms and banks where it was financed.

Some of the money is very well spent, mark you. The best use of it, in my opinion, was to create a charming and lovingly detailed village (the research people obviously had a ball) entirely inhabited by dwarves portraying a Hobbit-ish race called the Nelwyns, from whose ranks comes the hero dwarf, Willow, played by Warwick Davis with

shot, you see another fuzzy dark thing scurry up along the wall, just under the bridge, and only after all of that do you see a troll walking right side up atop the bridge as you or I would do. Excellent; a dandy piece of fantastic film!

And there are many other really grand moments—I would in no way want to deny that. As a matter of fact, for anyone interested in bizarre moviemaking, *Willow*, for all its faults, is pretty much a must. As the police minister said of the rotten boiled egg to his host in the ancient cartoon from the Victorian days of *Punch*, "Parts of it are excellent!" The brownies, for instance. I would not have you miss the brownies for the world, and Billy Barty is a swell Gandalf, though I would rather have seen him do it in *Lord of the Rings*.

But, sadly, as a working movie, *Willow* is totally out of control. All the many, many marvelous bits are strewn every which way, like things heaved into a soft bag. It bulges up here, it sags down over there, it sprawls out in the middle, and, in the end, the poor thing doesn't have any shape at all.

There's a weird sense of cinematic pillage running throughout *Willow* which I found very distracting. Jean Marsh is the evil queen in the movie, and her whole performance is taken entirely from the witch in *Return to Oz*. Her evil head officer is a giant wearing a medieval version of a beast/skull mask which is so much like that worn by Darth Vader that it's silly. The flying fairy's filched whole out of Disney; the swordsman-hero is a clone of guess which supposedly fiercely independent but actually hopelessly romantic space pilot played by guess who. And, though the details do differ, I was more than familiar with the entire plot, as every element is lifted in sawed-off chunks from somewhere else and never undergoes the unifying transformation that signals the presence of a new work of art. In fact, outside of the trolls and brownies (and, of course, they were really old friends, too), I'd met everybody, down to the extras, many times before.

I've said it before in reference to other brilliant producers, but I'll say it again in regard to Lucas: there is a treasure trove of marvelously gigantic fantastic novels begging to be made into movies. They have been written by towering wizards such as E.R. Eddison and George MacDonald; there are shelves of 'em. They'd make beautiful movies and you'd have a wonderful time working with them, and you'd be proud and thrilled with the results. Do it! Do it!

LETTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

of "The Breeze of Taos?" (And I don't mean the town in New Mexico.) Correct me if in error, but didn't an ancient Asian named Lao Tse propound analogous thoughts, sometime before Mr. Gleick, but in a more harmonious tone?

Maybe, in time, computer graphics will become subtle enough to model the way of the Tao.

By the way, I admire James Randi and his work on phony healing and other spiritual frauds. I know Harry Houdini devoted much of his life to the same cause. But I do wonder if they both don't "protest too much." As I recall, Houdini would have given anything to contact his beloved mother, and I bet James Randi would enjoy contacting Houdini.

Sure wish he could.

MR. C. L. FLOWERS
Percy, AR

I WAS ONE OF YOUR FIRST SUBSCRIBERS AND have watched your magazine grow from tenuous beginnings to a position of having a good solid foundation of readers. I had recently decided to resubscribe to TZ, especially since you have lately increased your inventory of better quality fiction.

My problem is with your article on "The Amazing Randi." It is difficult to believe that anyone could examine Randi's so-called *Skeptical Enquirer* with a thoughtful eye to scientific detail and method, and not come away with the realization that these people are damn scared of what they cannot explain. They approach the issue in a grossly distorted way that would be shot down immediately by any respectable scientific organization.

While it is true that most psychics deal with intuitive knowledge that is not provable, Randi could easily seek out someone who is capable of correctly identifying a specific piece of information in his background—something that he, and only he, knows. This ability has been demonstrated so many times that it is ridiculous to think that anyone who is honest with himself could seriously challenge it.

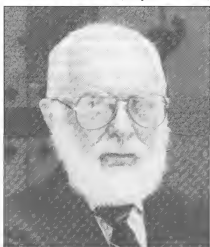
Although he is to be congratulated for his attitude that we are all masters of our own fates, it is diminished by his assertion that there is nothing "out there." The idea that consciousness ends with our limited humanoid state of being is a pathetically juvenile one.

S. M. SMITH
Columbus, OH

I WAS INTRIGUED BY YOUR SELECTION OF that old rascal James Randi as "Truth's Bodyguard," until I remembered how the term originated. Winston Churchill defined that function as follows:

"Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

I then realized that, in your wisdom,



James "The Amazing" Randi

you had indeed picked a most highly qualified person for that role, from a very competitive field of possibilities.

THEODORE ROCKWELL
Chevy Chase, MD

The double meaning of our title was unintentional. While we may not always agree with Mr. Randi, we believe him to be at all times faithful to the truth as he sees it. — ED.

AS SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THE NEW Age of the eighties is merely a copy of hippy spiritualism of the sixties, I was happy when my favorite debunker, James Randi, was given the chance to speak out on the topic. It is ironic that the interview was in the same issue (June 1988) as Julie Lee's letter to the editor, singing the *New Age's* praises.

Ms. Lee, as an atheist who believes "that any religion—ancient or new, accepted as genuine or forced underground—is merely a human society's rather immature way of dealing with the unknown or mysterious, I think that you should just sit back and imagine yourself twenty years in the future. You'll see that your crystals, harmonic convergences, and channelers will appear as dated and silly to you then as love beads, communions, and "Peace, Man!" do to most intelligent people today.

JAMES GONNEAU
Toronto, Ontario

I AGREE WITH TZ READER MICHAEL COLLIS, whose letter was printed in the June 1988 issue of TZ, that "New Age" and other psychic phenomena ought to be approached with a bit of skepticism. For that reason, I was pleased to read the James Randi interview in that same issue.

I read *Twilight Zone* because I enjoy science fiction, fantasy, and horror fiction. The one thing all three share is their dependence on the reader's willing suspension of disbelief. If a horror story, for example, is well written, I can accept, for the story's sake, a number of impossibilities, provided that they are presented in a way that does not insult my intelligence.

The New Age prophets and such other modern luminaries as Whitley Strieber make no effort whatsoever to make their stories believable. As James Randi pointed out, these people offer no evidence. Their claims are such that I find I cannot believe them without verification, but that verification is often impossible. I am not willing to suspend my disbelief, and I am not willing to give these people money or credence.

STEVE ROBY
Ontario, Canada

IN THE ARTICLE, "TRUTH'S BODYGUARD" BY Stanley Wiater (June '88 issue) there is a reference to Mr. Eldon Byrd which needs clarification. Byrd is not now "in prison in Washington, D.C." as stated. He is free on probation following his trial and admission of guilt.

I felt this should be corrected.

JAMES RANDI

I'VE READ SEVERAL ISSUES OF TZ NOW, and here is how I feel:

I find the interviews, "Books" and "Letters" especially interesting, and I always read them first.

Then I read each fiction piece in turn. Some of the stories don't get read all the way through because, unless the writer's style is particularly powerful or lyrical, they'd better get to "the point quickly enough to "grab" me.

As a reader who enjoys truly well-written *Twilight Zone*-style stories, I'm not at all interested in the authors' big names. It seems that the boring stories are *always* by the established writers. The best stories, the most tightly written, interesting, "terrifying" and original, are often those labeled "A TZ First." Please, let's have more of these.

LUCILLE POUPART
Chicago, IL

BOOKS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

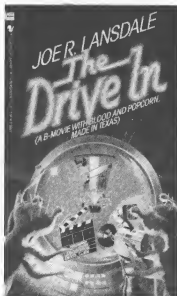
ries representing nineteen authors. (Richard Christian Matheson rates a "double feature.")

The reprints are all worth the effort. Robert Bloch's "The Movie People" takes a nostalgic look at the silent films and is an uncharacteristically understated and gentle tale for the author of *Psycho*. Clive Barker's "Son of Celluloid" is a cheerfully manic shocker about the gestalt madness of a crumbling movie palace and how it's catalyzed into a grotesque form of life by the intrusion of a dying gangster's cancer. Honest. This is Barker's vision of the new "loud" horror at its most brash. "More Sinned Against" by Karl Edward Wagner is one of three voodoo stories in the book, a slightly more upbeat version of the Mary C. Brown Hollywood legend. On the other hand, Jay Sheekley's "Bargain Cinema," along with its manifold meat puns, shows us the icier downside of John Mellencamp's ill-starred teenagers, Jack and Diane. Richard Christian Matheson's "Sirens" concisely sums up the real cost of stardom, in this case for a woman, in about the most ugly way possible. It's a killer. Douglas Winter's "Splatter: a Cautionary Tale" deliberately replicates J.G. Ballard's "condensed-novel" form well, posing in twenty-six paragraphs, each titled after a real or fabricated splatter movie, the tough and ugly controversy of whether violence in the media reflects or triggers similar human behavior. It's astonishing, a virtuoso achievement successfully couching an important essay in story form. This is how didactic fiction should be written. Finally, Ramsey Campbell's "The Show Goes On" is a typically restrained but sinister exercise in which a faded Liverpool shopkeeper finds himself exploring the ghastly interior of the long-darkened cinema next door.

Here's the brand-new material: *Silver Screem* leads strong with an introduction by Tobe (Texas Chainsaw Massacre) Hooper, done in movie-script format. It's an interesting autobiographical piece that segues cinematically—and virtually seamlessly—into John M. Ford's "Preflash," a powerful story about a young genius filmmaker who discovers he can "see" the future deaths of his fellow humans. Additionally, Ford's tale is about political chicanery and assassination, pop music, the effect of communications media on life, as well as the very nature of death. Ford doesn't cut much slack for his readers—I've got a strong sense that I'm expected

to read the author's mind about a few aspects of the story; but in this case, it's okay. There's a strong sense of meaning, even if not all of it is immediately obvious.

F. Paul Wilson's "Cuts" is the second voodoo story in the book, and it's by far the nastiest. It's a revenge fantasy showing what befalls a swinish writer-director "auteur" after he butchers an author's only novel. I must assume that Wilson's experiences with the adap-



tation of his own novel *The Keep* into a pretty but vapid movie had nothing to do with this story. The remaining voodoo piece is Craig Spector's "LifeCast." This time the aggrieved party is a young special effects/makeup person victimized by a loutish producer. Spector, usually teamed with his long-time collaborator John Skipp, shows here that his solo prose is just fine.

Ray (Live Girls) Garton offers the tender tale of a young boy perverted by, among other things, the insidious influence of the movies. What gives "Sinema" a special quality is the novel setting—a Seventh-day Adventist community in rural California. Chet Williamson's "Return of the Neon Fireball" is a bittersweet *Twilight Zone*-sort of account of a middle-aged man, one of two partners attempting to bring a moribund drive-in back to life, who desperately wishes to return to his high-school past. Stephen R. Boyett's "The Answer Tree" is the psychological examination of an obsessed film scholar viewing the final offering of a powerful and morbid director, now dead. This is certainly the most muscular and hard-edged writing Boyett has done.

Robert McCammon's "Night Calls the Green Falcon" is a pure delight. Told

in chapters structured and titled like the episodes of a forties serial, the story traces the adventures of a onetime B-serial great, now aging ungracefully in a crummy Hollywood hotel, who attempts to track down the serial killer who has butchered the young woman from down the hall. Pulp-era make-believe movie hero vs. contemporary psychopath—it's a pleasing blend of action, nostalgia, and engaging characters. This is a bit in the same tradition as such films as Scorsese's *After Hours* and Landis's *Into the Night*. "A Life in the Cinema" by Mick Garris casts a sardonic gaze at an ambitious and exploitive filmmaker obtaining what he thinks is just your run-of-the-mill Mexican deformed baby as the centerpiece of his new production, with appropriately twisted consequences. Freshman director Garris (*Critters II*) gives his story an unexpected climax of erotic horror.

Richard Christian Matheson's second feature, "Hell," is another compressed nugget (or perhaps the better term would be "aneurysm") of terror which ought to keep most out-of-town readers from ever desiring to drive in summertime L.A. Especially with the top down and the radio blasting.... John Skipp's "Film at Eleven" is a peculiar blending of tragic real life and fantasy. It depicts an abused wife whose cries for help take the form of letters to Oprah Winfrey. It is not at all a pleasant story, but then, it's not supposed to be.

Probably the most powerful story in the entire anthology is Joe R. Lansdale's "The Night They Missed the Horror Show," set in 1968, on a weekend when two good-old-Texas-high-school boys named Leonard and Billy opt out of seeing *Night of the Living Dead* (mostly because it's got a black protagonist) and aimlessly decide to raise some hell. What happens to them then shouldn't happen to a dog. Lansdale's account of Leonard and Billy's encounter with the black high-school star quarterback Scott, and the gigantic twin snuff-movie entrepreneurs, Vinnie and Pork, is a consummate horror story, in spite of containing absolutely no element of the supernatural. Lansdale's recounting of casual racism and offhand violence is told in a voice that makes the reader laugh and squirm simultaneously. Harry Crews would approve. Maybe old Bill Faulkner would, too.

The climactic story in *Silver Screem* is Mark Arnold's "Pilgrims to the Cathedral." This is a long piece that might well have benefitted from being longer yet. Reading "Pilgrims" is somewhat suggestive of scanning the outline

for a Howard Waldrop novel. The prose is crammed with splendid off-the-wall strangeness that reads beautifully. Arnold's ear and eye for Ohio detail are marvelous. His resuscitated mega-drive-in, "The Zone," somewhat reminiscent of the Orbit in Joe Lansdale's *The Drive In*, is a libertarian dream of free enterprise gone magically berserk. The problem comes when tone and focus both change late on, and the initial cast of characters either gets killed or moves offscreen. "Pilgrims" sea changes into a bitter attack on far-wacko Christianity, culminating in an apocalyptic blood-bath that would have done justice to Skipp and Spector's *The Scream*. I wasn't convinced; it all seemed too abbreviated. Much of what the author devised is very sound indeed, but so much more seems distanced, expository, the bones of a greater work.

Editor David Schow fills out this medium-hefty book with better than nine thousand words of anecdotal material about his contributors. Some might level the charge of self-indulgence, not to mention wretched excess. Me, I love this sort of ephemeral material. If readers don't want to read the skinny on Skipp and Spector, Clive Barker and Ray Garton, they don't have to. The editor didn't pay himself for the wordage, so it's not as though an extra novelette is being used out. Keeping to the film motif, Schow's afterword functions as the roll of end-credits.

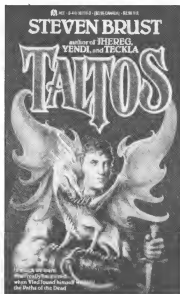
While I'm giving *Silver Scream* a high recommendation, I am impelled to add one cultural note about this whole matter of film and literature or suspense/horror. Only one female writer, Jay Sheekley, is included. I don't think this represents evidence of innate sexual chauvinism on the editor's part. It's just that, Kathryn Bigelow and Amy Jones notwithstanding, silver screams have up to now been largely male. Horror movies are where the boys play. Would that were different, but things haven't changed much yet.

Short Tales

Finally, here's a quick shopping list of some books you should be reading.

Terry Bisson is a writer who thankfully does not suffer from gigantism. His earlier novels, *Wyrdmaker* and *Talking Man*, were both spare and to the point. So is his latest, *Fire on the Mountain* (Arbor House, \$15.95, 192 pp., ISBN 1-55710-014-4). Move over, Ward Moore and MacKinlay Kantor! The South has risen again—this time as a spare and brilliantly illuminated Black utopia. *Fire on the Mountain* is an exquisitely crafted alternate history

in which John Brown and Harriet Tubman succeeded in their raid on Harper's Ferry. By 1959, it's simply an historical given that the US of A has ended up as several partitioned socialist states. This is a world in which dirigibles still soar and a Pan-African expedition has made it to Mars. Bisson somehow meshes several time-frames and a set of characters drawn from a full century of history, and makes it all work. His novel touched my heart, brought tears to my



eyes, and kept me thinking about it for days after I finished reading it.

Barking Dogs by Terence M. Green (St. Martin's Press, \$15.95, 214 pp., ISBN 0-312-01424-4) is another novel without an ounce of flab. Green is a Canadian with one previously published collection of short fiction. This is his debut novel, and it's a good one. As much as anything, *Barking Dogs* can be tagged as a police procedural set in a very near-future Toronto where the bad guys have all the high-tech armament, plenty of inclination to use it, and the cops are on the ropes. Officer Mitch Helwig, now that he's lost his partner to some street-punk scuzzball, has a set of psychological drives easily sympathetic with either Mad Max or the star of *RoboCop*: He goes out and uses his own life savings to attempt to put himself on the same level of player as the crooks. What results isn't simply a *Deathwish-XXX*. Helwig has to deal with gritty reality, but he is still a man of some moral complexity. Along with acquitting themselves ably in street-level firefights, Green's characters can discuss Joseph Conrad and have it mean something. Green's done well.

Well, it amuses me sometimes to define a key to certain books in terms

of connoted bridges to other writers. For example, what if Edgar Allan Poe were alive now, inspired to write a compressed novel after reading King's *Cujo*, and had been a long-time fan of Edward Gorey? He'd probably be Stephen Gregory and he would have written *The Cormorant* (St. Martin's Press, \$13.95, 148 pp., ISBN 0-312-01753-7). This was a mainstream award-winner in Britain. It's about a couple, with baby, who are obliged by the will of the husband's deceased uncle to accept custody of a large and nasty seabird in exchange for getting to live in the uncle's house in the Welsh hills. How the bird brings first disquiet, then a hell of violent tragedy to the family's life, makes for a morbidly nonstop fascination for the reader. The jacket says *The Cormorant* is "a thriller." True enough. Just as *Moby Dick* is "a fish story."

Every once in awhile, I get the itch to dig into that mountain of what is loosely marketed as "high fantasy" and see how the wizards and dragons are doing. But I try to exercise a bit of discretion. This time I tried Steven Brust's *Taltos* (Ace, \$2.95, 181 pp., ISBN 0-441-18200-3). This is the fourth in fantasist Brust's series about the roguish and hard-nosed Vlad Taltos, a capable young man who has risen high in the criminal hierarchy of the never-never city of Adrilankha. *Taltos* runs on three parallel narrative levels, flashing back both to episodes of Vlad's childhood when he was learning magic from his grandfather, and his very young manhood when he was learning the ropes as a journeyman assassin. The story strand in the present tells how our hero, accompanied by his psionic familiar and the dour wizard-noble Morrolan, traverses the netherworld in search of a revived dead woman. What makes Brust's book stand out is the style, a brash, wisecracking mixture of *roman noir*, equally suggestive of Raymond Chandler or the early Roger Zelazny. It's a breath of fresh chilly air.

In Darkness Waiting by John Shirley (NAL, \$3.50, 269 pp., ISBN 0-451-40080-1) is a far-better-than-average horror thriller that combines both corporate shenanigans in the occult with demonic attacks upon a small, isolated community. Big deal, right? Well, it is. Shirley, as he did in his minor classic of psychopathic murder and misplaced community pride, *The Brigade*, mixes both a fine sense of place (in this case, inland Oregon) with a wry eye toward ringing some changes on the stock figures of pop horror fiction. Don't lose this one in the supermarket wire-rack shuffle. ■

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